

Obesity and obesity-related comorbidities research

Rehabilitation Research and Development (RR&D) Service, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), announces the opportunity for clinician scientists and researchers to submit proposals for funding of research studies focusing on the chronic disease of obesity and its comorbidities.

Obesity is a national epidemic that is plaguing not only the adult civilian population but veterans as well. It is a complex, multifactorial chronic disease caused by interaction of genetic, metabolic, behavioral, psychological, and environmental (social and cultural) factors. The increasing prevalence of overweight and obesity and the corresponding incidence of obesity-related medical complications that lead to increased morbidity and mortality underscore the need for preventing and treating obesity. Despite the prevalence of obesity and the many efforts in treating diabetes mellitus, stroke, hypertension, coronary artery disease, and other obesity-related comorbidities, effective measures to prevent the causative condition have languished.

Studies should seek to improve function, independence, and overall quality of life by (1) identifying the underlying causes of obesity and examining obesity-related risk factors such as diabetes mellitus, dyslipidemia, and cardiovascular disease; and (2) developing medical, surgical, pharmacological, and behavioral modalities of prevention and treatment that focus on obesity in the context of special veteran populations, such as racial/ethnic minorities, women, and other adults; and veterans with motor and neurological impairments and/or chronic mental illness and with mobility impairments.

Investigators such as nutritionists, endocrinologists, orthopedic surgeons, physiatrists, and physical and occupational therapists who challenge existing paradigms and incorporate innovative ideas in obesity research are encouraged to apply. Examples of priority research areas include, but are not restricted to, obesity in spinal cord injury and multiple sclerosis patients, hormone and metabolic regulation, animal models of leptin, mobility limitations, weight management and appropriate exercise regimens, regulation of appetite and energy consumption, social stigma and discrimination in community and employment sectors, sleep apnea, aging and skeletal muscle disorders, osteoarthritis of the knee and hip, drug therapy and bariatric surgery, neurological basis of obesity, and associated physical conditions that are not comorbid factors, such as female reproductive disorders, gastroesophageal reflux, urinary incontinence, and heat disorders.

Funding of proposals is contingent upon the availability of funds. Proposals submitted as pilot studies will be funded for one year at \$50,000 and standard merit proposals will be funded for three years at \$250,000 a year. Letters of intent are due by October 15, 2004, and proposals are due at RR&D by December 15, 2004.

To obtain information regarding applications and instructions for the RR&D standard review process visit the RR&D website at <http://www.vard.org>. Questions about scientific and/or research issues should be directed to Denise Burton, PhD, Portfolio Manager, Chronic Medical Diseases, RR&D Service, at 202-254-0268 or denise.burton@hq.med.va.gov.

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