



## Rehabilitation Research and Development

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Rory Cooper, PhD, to receive highest award offered by the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs



**PITTSBURGH, Sept. 16** – Rory A. Cooper, Ph.D., director of the VA Rehabilitation Research and Development’s National Center of Excellence for Wheelchair and Related Technology and VA senior career research scientist, will receive the Department of Veterans Affairs’ prestigious Olin E. Teague Award for outstanding work with disabled veterans in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 18, 2002. Dr. Cooper is also professor and chair, department of rehabilitation science and technology at the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, professor, physical medicine and rehabilitation, School of Medicine and professor, mechanical engineering and bioengineering, and physical medicine and rehabilitation at the School of Medicine, all at the University of Pittsburgh.

The Teague Award is granted to a VA employee or employees working as a team whose achievements have been of special benefit to veterans with service-connected problems. The award honors the late Olin E. Teague, U.S. Representative from Texas, an advocate of disabled veterans who served as Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs for 18 years.

“Dr. Cooper’s research has contributed to veterans living longer with less pain from secondary disabilities,” said Michael E. Moreland, director, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. “He has streamlined wheelchairs and through his advocacy efforts has improved access to wheelchairs.”

The award recognizes Dr. Cooper’s contributions to the rehabilitation of paralyzed individuals to include the design of modern manual and electric powered wheelchairs, the development and implementation of wheelchair standards, the understanding of secondary disabilities among wheelchair users, and the need for improving community integration for veterans who use wheelchairs.

Dr. Cooper is recognized as one of the world’s authorities in wheelchair design and technology. His work has led to an improvement in wheelchair quality, ultimately improving the lives of those who depend on them. He is driven by a passion for assistive technology and uses it to enhance rehabilitation. He was instrumental in creating an entirely new class of wheelchair and in expanding the use of the electric powered wheelchair.

He helped the Department of Veterans Affairs create guidelines for the prescription of wheelchairs and helped develop revised eligibility for electric-powered wheelchairs to include veterans who do not have the ability to propel a manual wheelchair due to pain, low cardiovascular capacity, or upper limb injury.

A bronze medal winner in the 1988 Paralympic Games, Dr. Cooper’s expertise in wheelchair design has also made it possible for many more to participate in activities such as wheelchair racing and cycling.