

Pain/Opioid CORE

VA HSR&D

Pain/Opioid Consortium of Research

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U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENT

2024 Pain/Opioid CORE Rapid Start Funding Opportunity

The 2024 Pain/Opioid CORE & Whole Health Rapid Start Funding opportunity is now open for submissions. The purpose of the opportunity is to support rapid quality improvement (QI) and program evaluation projects of up to \$50,000, on Whole Health for pain and/or opioid use disorder (OUD). The CORE will be considering applications for 1- or 2-year projects that are a) consistent with CORE and Office of Patient Centered Care & Cultural Transformation (OPCCCT) priorities and b) likely to meaningfully inform future applications for VA funding (e.g., IIR, Service-Directed Research, QUERI project, Pain and Opioid Use (POU) actively-managed portfolio), answer priority questions (secondary analysis), or advance implementation and/or expansion of Whole Health programs.

Early career investigators are encouraged to apply, with preference points awarded to these applicants during the review period. Early career investigators should include a senior mentor/co-investigator in an appropriate role who can provide guidance on the proposed project.

Additional information, including priority areas, eligibility, submission requirements, and expectations of awardees, can be found on [the Pain/Opioid CORE website](#).

The deadline for proposal submissions is **January 16, 2024, 11:59PM PST**. Proposals must be emailed as a single PDF document to PainOpioidCORE@va.gov. Proposals not submitted as a single PDF will not be accepted.

Office hours will also be held on December 15, 2023 and January 5, 2024, from 1:00-2:00pmEST via Teams meeting listed in the RFA. For other questions please check the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) or contact PainOpioidCore@va.gov or Kathryn.LaChappelle@va.gov.

2023 Pain/Opioid CORE Annual Meeting

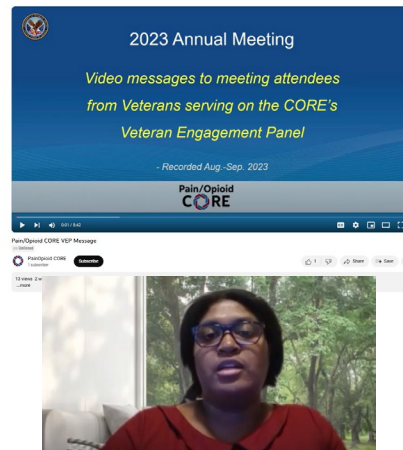
In September 2023, the Pain/Opioid CORE hosted an in-person annual meeting. CORE principal investigators and staff were joined in Minneapolis, MN by attendees including members of the CORE's Internal Leadership Committee, Office of Research and Development (ORD) key stakeholders, and VA program leaders (OMHSP-SUD, PMOP, OPCCCT¹).

This year's annual meeting featured strategic planning discussions related to future directions of the Pain/Opioid CORE. Attendees reviewed the CORE's strengths, according to a variety of key stakeholders, and engaged in a series of four dialogues to consider 1) the CORE mission statement and scope, 2) how to work with program office partners to identify projects the CORE is uniquely positioned to execute, 3) ways to expand cross-service reach of CORE activities, and 4) opportunities and considerations for advancing Veteran engagement activities within the CORE and across ORD. The results of these strategic discussions are currently being considered by CORE leadership for potential implementation. Stay tuned for updates as the CORE adapts to build on its strengths and evolve with changing circumstances.

¹ OMHSP-SUD: Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, Substance Used Disorder Program; PMOP: Office of Pain Management, Opioid Safety, and Prescription Drug Monitoring Program; OPCCCT: Office of Patient-Centered Care and Cultural Transformation

CORE Veteran Engagement Panel Impacts VA

The Pain/Opioid CORE Veteran Engagement Panel (VEP) continues to meet regularly, offering valuable insights and feedback to VA researchers, stakeholders, and leadership. Veteran members are a diverse group of individuals with a wide range of ages and backgrounds and have provided feedback on various research related topics. Recently, VEP members have begun sharing their perspectives and insights through recorded videos, creating opportunities for broader dissemination of their voices across the VA pain and opioid research community.



In collaboration with CORE staff, two Veteran experience videos were developed and featured at two national VA meetings earlier this year: the *PACT Pain Champions: Roles & Responsibilities Conference* (sponsored by PMOP and the Primary Care Office) and the *Pain/Opioid CORE Annual Meeting*.

According to meeting organizers and attendees, these videos played an important role grounding the meetings with the perspectives and voices of Veterans. The videos received overwhelmingly positive feedback and may be an efficient and effective way to incorporate Veteran voices into these types of meetings, when in-person attendance is not feasible.

Another member of the CORE VEP, Kathryn Washington, participated in a video interview, at the 2023 HSR&D/QUERI National Meeting, about her perspectives on VA research. This recording is featured in the HSR&D *Veteran Voices* video series ([access the video](#)). Kathryn attended the national meeting with another VEP member and CORE staff to present a Veteran engagement forum about the CORE's VEP meeting processes. In her interview, Kathryn shared valuable feedback on her personal experiences engaging in VA research, advice to fellow Veterans, investigators, and the broader VA community. Her transparency and feedback contributes to broader efforts to integrate Veteran voices throughout VA research.

For more information about the CORE VEP, along with answers to [frequently asked questions](#) related to Veteran Engagement, please visit our [website](#). Contact Tracy.Sides@va.gov with questions or to schedule a consultation.

CORE Member Highlights

Sarah Krein, PhD, RN: Recipient of the 2022 HSR&D Daniel Deykin Award for Outstanding Mentor



Sarah Krein

Sarah Krein is an HSR&D Research Career Scientist at the Ann Arbor VA and a member of the Pain/Opioid CORE's Internal Leadership Committee and Career Development Workgroup. She is also a Research Professor of Internal Medicine and the Rensis Likert Collegiate Research Professor at the University of Michigan.

Earlier this year, Sarah received the [HSR&D Daniel Deykin Award for Outstanding Mentor](#). Recipients of this award must exhibit an outstanding dedication in mentoring the next generation of researchers and exhibit skills of fostering an appreciation for the vital input provided by VA stakeholders and guiding mentees toward an

understanding of the positive impact research can have on the health and care of Veterans. One of her mentees, Sameer Saini, MD, MS, captured many of the reasons Sarah was selected for this award when he described her as “an outstanding mentor, researcher, role model, and leader, one who never seeks the spotlight or attention, but who is truly remarkable when you consider her impact on a broad and diverse array of mentees both directly and indirectly over a long and highly impactful career. She is kind and thoughtful, a brilliant methodologist, a renaissance woman (did you know that she flies helicopters?), and an exceptional mentor, advisor, and sponsor.” Congratulations Sarah!

Sarah Javier, PhD: New VA HSR&D Career Development Awardee



Sarah Javier

Sarah Javier, a Health Science Specialist at the VA Palo Alto, member of the Pain/Opioid CORE Career Development Workgroup, and recipient of one of the 2022 Pain/Opioid CORE Rapid Start Funding Awards (RSF), recently received an HSR&D Career Development Award (CDA). Through her project *Addressing Disparities in Pain Management*, Sarah plans to develop a tailored implementation blueprint for increasing uptake of non-pharmacologic pain treatments among diverse Veterans (i.e., Veterans of color and women). Sarah’s Pain/Opioid CORE RSF project, awarded in 2022 with co-PI Ashley Griffin, is directly impacting the methods of this CDA. Sarah shared that, “I am optimistic that this project can help inform the future implementation of evidence-based practices, and particularly NPTs, among historically marginalized groups across VA and other healthcare systems.” Congratulations Sarah!

Rendelle Bolton, PhD, MPH, MSW: Career Development Researcher Spotlight



Rendelle Bolton

Rendelle Bolton is a co-investigator at the VA Bedford Healthcare System, Center for Healthcare Organization and Implementation Research. Her research is currently focused in three areas: (1) the adoption, coordination, and delivery of nonpharmacologic therapies for chronic pain; (2) the use of implementation strategies to facilitate large-scale system transformation including for VA’s Whole Health System of care; and (3) the incorporation of person-centered approaches into interdisciplinary teams and across clinical settings. Dr. Bolton is currently developing a new grant to examine the effects of cross-setting coordination on outcomes for patients with chronic pain.

Rendelle shared that the Pain/Opioid CORE has been instrumental to her as an early career researcher. She received a Pain/Opioid CORE Rapid Starting Funding Award and is a three-year member of the Career Development Workgroup. Rendelle noted how these experiences provided growth opportunities, support, and enhanced visibility of her research.

Recent publications from Rendelle:

- Bolton R, Bokhour BG, Dvorin K, Wu J, Elwy AR, Charns M, Taylor S (2021). Garnering support for complementary and integrative health implementation: a qualitative study of VA healthcare organization leaders. *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, 27, S81-S88. [[Link to PubMed article](#)]
- Bolton R, Mohr DC, Charns MP, Herbst AN, Bokhour BG (2023). Creating whole person health care systems: understanding employee perceptions of VA’s Whole Health cultural transformation. *Journal of Integrative and Complementary Medicine*. Online ahead of print. [[Link to PubMed article](#)]
- Courtney RE, Schadegg MJ, Bolton R, Smith S, Harden SM (2023). Using a whole health approach to build biopsychosocial-spiritual personal health plans for veterans with chronic pain. *Pain Management Nursing*. Online ahead of print. [[Link to PubMed article](#)]

NEW

New HSR&D CORE: Access and Community Care CORE

In July, HSR&D announced the launch of a new COnsortium of REsearch (CORE) on access and community care – aka the Access and Community Care Engagement Network Team (ACCENT) CORE.

One of the top priorities of the Veterans Health Administration is to “connect Veterans to the soonest and best care.” HSR&D’s announcement noted its longstanding commitment to this VHA priority through funding research that focuses on improving access to care for Veterans in VHA and community care settings. ACCENT CORE builds upon the prior work of the [Community Care Research Evaluation and Knowledge \(CREEK\) Center](#) and the [Veterans Access Research Consortium \(VARC\)](#). The goal is to focus on the intersections of care—in-person care, community care, and virtual care, as well as direct VA and community care — to better understand what care type is best for each Veteran, for each condition, irrespective of where the Veteran lives.

[ACCENT](#) joins the [Pain/Opioid CORE](#) and four other HSR&D research networks ([Suicide Prevention Research Impact Network – SPRINT CORE](#), [Virtual Care CORE](#), [Women’s Health Research Network](#), and the [Coordinating Hub to Promote Research Optimizing Veteran-centric Electronic Health Record \(EHR\) Networks - PROVEN](#)) that serve as resources to advance VA research priorities. These priorities overlap and collaboration is a cornerstone of VA research. Those interested in staying apprised of access and community care policy updates, recently published research, and how to get assistance obtaining Letters of Support from the Office of Integrated Care (IVC), or getting involved with ACCENT workgroups, please reach out to ACCENT Project Manager, Valerie.Marteeny@va.gov and provide your contact information. [Visit the ACCENT webpage for more information.](#)

Upcoming Events

[SAVE-THE-DATE: December 12, 2023, 12:00 - 1:30 ET | ACTION Virtual Presentation and Discussion](#)

Incorporating Patient Treatment Preferences in Clinical Trial Design

Analgesic, Anesthetic, and Addiction Clinical Trial Translations, Innovations, Opportunities, and Networks (ACTION) will host PCORI-supported biostatistician, Kelly Kidwell, who has expertise in adaptive trial design and partially randomized patient preference trials, to present and discuss several trial designs that incorporate patient treatment preferences. Ample time will be available for group discussion and questions. [Join the Zoom meeting through this link.](#)

[SAVE-THE-DATE: December 30, 2023, 2:00 - 3:00 ET | VA Substance Use Disorder Treatment Foundational Seminars](#)

LGBTQ+ Equity in Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Treatment Research

Join Nicholas Livingston, PhD (he/him) and Alex McDonnell, PhD (they/them) during the upcoming SUD Foundational Seminar Series to learn about LGBTQ+ disparities in SUD Treatment and their impact on Veteran Health; the importance of assessment of diverse gender identities and sexual orientation, assessment tools, and methods for incorporating these measures into SUD research; and the mission, activities, and resources of the VA LGBTQ+ Health Program. Join through this [Teams Meeting Link](#) [Passcode: h7Etzi].

Recording now available: HSR&D Spotlight on Pain Management Cyberseminar**Developing a Pain Management Model for Patients Receiving Medication for Opioid Use Disorder**

Few evidence-based integrated treatments exist for managing opioid use disorder and chronic pain. During this presentation, Declan Barry, PhD reviewed a recently started clinical trial, funded by NIH, that involves a stepped-care model for the management of opioid use disorder and chronic pain, as well as, the background studies that informed the selection of its main components. [Watch the recording on the HSR&D website.](#)

Recording now available: HSR&D Complementary and Integrative Health Cyberseminar**Balancing Characteristics of Veterans on Long-term Opioid Therapy Who Used vs. Did Not Use CIH Services**

During this presentation Anne Black, PhD discussed how the use of complementary and integrative health (CIH) services within the VHA by Veterans on long-term opioid therapy differs by Veteran characteristics such as sex and race. Anne compared characteristics of a national cohort of Veterans who used vs. did not use CIH services in the context of long-term opioid therapy and described methods used to balance these groups on exposure-related covariates as a step toward estimating the causal relationship between CIH and opioid tapering outcomes. [Watch the recording on the HSR&D website.](#)

International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP) 2024 World Congress on Pain

The 2024 IASP World Congress on Pain meeting will be held in Amsterdam, Netherlands on August 5-9, 2024. This global meeting is the largest gathering of pain professionals in the world and will bring together more than 7,000 scientists, clinicians, and healthcare providers from around the world and across pain disciplines.

Important dates and deadlines:

December 1	Poster Abstract Submissions Opens
December 1	Financial Aid Opens
January 31	Financial Aid Applications Close
April 1	Early Bird Registration Ends



Pain/Opioid CORE

[More information about the Pain/Opioid CORE >>](#)

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VA HSR&D COREs

ACCENT CORE

Pain/Opioid CORE

Suicide Prevention CORE

Virtual Care CORE

[Click here](#) for more information about VA HSR&D Consortia of Research (COREs).