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Dr. Robert Keith, MD.
ACOS, Research Service

If you have content you would like shared in the newsletter, please email Meredith Mealer at meredith.mealer@va.gov. Newsletter is published on a quarterly basis.

Important Updates/Announcements



2026 Thoracic Oncology Assembly Enduring Impact Award

Congratulations to Dr. Robert Keith, MD

The award is given to an individual who has made outstanding scientific contributions in clinical, translational, or laboratory-

based research relevant to the field of thoracic oncology and/or exemplary service to the Assembly through education of the lung cancer community and program development. This award is intended for an established, internationally recognized individual with a record of sustained exemplary achievement in the areas of Assembly interest.

Dr. Keith has a longstanding interest in the biology of airway pre-malignancy, the early detection of lung cancer, and chemoprevention. His lung cancer interests stem from clinical work with veterans, and many of his patients have smoking induced pre-malignant lung lesions that may or may not progress to lung cancer. His research team aims to better understand the characteristics of pre-cancerous airway lesions to find safe, easy to administer agents that intercept the development of invasive lung cancer.

Important Updates/Announcements

Congratulations to our ECHCS PIs that received a notice of intent to fund their VA research proposals from Winter Round 2026

Notice of Intent to Award from VA Rehabilitation & Translational Research

Clinical Trials

Adam Kinney, PhD (MIRECC) – *Sleep MAPP: A Tool to Improve Insomnia Disorder Treatment Among Veterans Receiving Polytrauma/TBI System of Care Services*

Joshua Yarrow, PhD (GRECC) - *A Multisite, Double-Blind, Randomized Controlled Trial Comparing Body Composition, Muscle, and Bone Changes to Testosterone Therapy With or Without Finasteride after Spinal Cord Injury: TRT-SCI Trial*

Notice of Intent to Award from VA Health Systems Research

Clinical Trial

Joseph Simonetti, MD (MIRECC) - *A Randomized Clinical Trial of the VA Secure Homes Lethal Means Intervention for Veterans with Elevated Suicide Risk*

VA Research Administration Updates

Upcoming Changes to the Conflict of Interest Process

New Requirements Effective July 1, 2026, many VA investigators (VA-Paid, WOC, or IPA) who serve a key personnel role on VA Research projects and hold dual appointment/employment with an affiliated university, or their VA's nonprofit corporation (NPC), must obtain a waiver of 18 U.S.C. § 208 COI statutes PRIOR to participating in VA research. For Principal Investigators (PIs), including Co-PIs, participation begins when submitting a funding application. A new online tool will assist with this requirement, i.e., the VA Electronic Determination Aid for Conflict of Interest (VAEDA-COI).

Who is Impacted? Anyone participating personally and substantially in VA research is impacted, if their financial interests or that of a spouse/child/partner are impacted (e.g., compensated project effort), and/or if the financial interests of an outside employer (university, NPC) or other entity with whom they have a relationship (e.g., sponsor) are impacted. A waiver is required for personal AND (not or) substantial participation, and typically only the activities of key personnel (i.e., PI, Co-PI, Co-Investigator) meet both requirements. Therefore, in general all key personnel, who have ALWAYS been required to submit a conflict-of-interest disclosure (VA Form Alt-450) for each protocol prior to participation in a VA research project, must now additionally obtain a 208 waiver, if applicable, prior to participation. PI and Co-PI must submit for initial determination of waiver eligibility before submitting a funding application; other key personnel do so before protocol initiation.

VA Research Administration Updates

Changes to the Conflict of Interest Process cont...

Role on Project	Before Application	Protocol Initiation	Notes
Principal Investigator or Co-PI	✓	✓ (update)	
Co-Investigator/Other Key Personnel	✗	✓	
Study Coordinator	✗*	✗*	*Role does not typically meet definition of personal and substantial participation, only submit if it does
Nurse, Statistician, Pharmacist, etc.	✗*	✗*	
Consultant	✗*	✗*	

How to Comply: (starting July 1, 2026)

1. Log in to <https://vaeda-coi.va.gov> using your VA PIV card on a VA system or VPN.
 2. Create a user profile on first visit.
 3. Complete the branching-logic questionnaire to determine waiver needs and eligibility. VAEDA-COI will ask ONLY the necessary follow-up questions required to make a determination, based on earlier answers.
 4. VAEDA output will include a determination summary letter, a completed Alt-450 e-signed by you, and a draft waiver (if needed and eligible). Your station Financial Conflict of Interest Administrator (FCOIA) will review your submission and route the waiver to the facility Director for signature when required. In limited cases where a final determination cannot be made, VAEDA-COI will advise you that further consultation with OGC Ethics is needed.
- Previously approved COIs are good until their next annual renewal. The investigator will then be required to utilize the new COI waiver system.
 - For assistance with this new process, your Research FCOIA, Todd Furbacher todd.furbacher@va.gov is available to provide assistance.

VA Research Administration Updates

Unions reinstated

If you see union dues deducted from your paycheck but have not authorized this change, you may submit the attached form through the website linked below to update your status. You may also use this site to start union dues deductions if desired.

This message is intended solely as an informational notice and does not constitute endorsement or opposition with regard to union membership. Please be aware that these changes may occur without explicit notification.

For questions, you may contact Bernard Humbles, AFGE 2241 Union President (Bernard.Humbles@va.gov), or reach out to Lauren Davis (Lauren.Davis8@va.gov).

Background:

The VA Secretary recently issued notices to the following VHA bargaining units, reinstating the corresponding Master Collective Bargaining Agreements effective immediately:

AFGE and AFGE's National VA Council (all AFGE units in VA)

United Nurses Association of California/Union of Healthcare Professionals (UNAC/UNHP, Loma Linda VA Medical Center)

Laborers International Union of North America (LiUNA) Local 1322 (Providence, RI VA Medical Center)

LiUNA Local 572 (Washington, DC VA Medical Center)

LiUNA Local 1029 (Wilmington, DE VA Medical Center)

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 2168 (Cheyenne, WY VA Medical Center)

Wisconsin Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals (WFNHP) Local 500 (Milwaukee, WI VA Medical Center)

Veterans Affairs Staff Nurse Council (VASNC) Local 5032 (Milwaukee, WI VA Medical Center)

Only the unions listed above have currently been reinstated.

To start or stop union dues, please follow this link:

<https://vaww.cpm.fsc.va.gov/prweb/PRWebLDAP1/>

Then navigate to: Payroll > Union Items > Start/Stop Union Dues, and attach the completed form.

If you have any further questions, please let me know.

Thank you,

James Hill

Director of Research Operations

Eastern Colorado Health Care System

435-241-2056



VA Research Administration Updates

National Center for Ethics in Health Care, Research, Innovation, and Data Ethics (RIDE) Program

- VA NCEHC’s Research, Innovation, and Data Ethics (RIDE) Team offers resources for addressing ethical issues in VA research.
- Research ethics consultation (REC) is an advisory service that can help with identifying, analyzing, and responding to ethics concerns.
- Anyone involved in VA research at any stage may request REC from NCEHC RIDE.

vhaethics@va.gov
[NCEHC SharePoint](#)
[NCEHC RIDE Program SharePoint Page](#)



Ethics Expertise

- **Research Ethics**
 - Consent and decision-making
 - Recruitment and retention
 - Risk/benefit analysis
 - Respecting participants
 - Scientific integrity
 - Boundary issues
- **Innovation Ethics**
 - New interventions (e.g., AI)
- **Data Ethics**
 - Collecting, using, and sharing data

RIDE Services

- **Consultation**
 - Practical ethics advice
 - Supplement to leadership/policy/oversight
- **Integration**
 - Committee/workgroup service
 - Developing/implementing policy
- **Education**
 - Guidance and other resources
 - Trainings and educational activities

VA Research Administration Updates

Please join us in welcoming Research Admin's new Research and Development Committee (RDC) Coordinator

Dr. Heather Klug joins the VA as the new Research & Development Committee coordinator, bringing over 18 years' experience in research and regulatory oversight, including IACUC and IRB administration. Following her Ph.D. in Biological Sciences, she completed a Cancer Prevention Fellowship at NCI studying immunology in a mouse melanoma model. She comes most recently from the NIH having served as a Program Officer.

2026 VA Research Days Celebration

We are proud to announce our 2026 VA Research Days Celebration

“Launching into the Future of Veteran's Care”

September 14th and 15th at the Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center

Oral Presentations in the Main Auditorium

Poster Sessions in the Concourse

Dennis J. Ahnen Lectureship: Dr. Aasma Shaukat

<https://aasmashaukatmd.com/>

VA Keynote Speaker: Dr. Jennifer Stevens-Lapsley

<https://www.va.gov/eastern-colorado-health-care/stories/va-eastern-colorado-researcher-receives-magnuson-award/>

Stay tuned for Call for Abstracts

VA Research Administration Updates

Centralized Transcription Services Program (CTSP) Services Closure

After careful consideration and review, leadership has made the difficult decision to close CTSP effective 6/16/2026.

This decision was not made lightly. It reflects the changes in department direction and the need to focus resources where they can have the greatest impact. We deeply value the projects we've been a part of and the relationships we've built over the years.

What this means:

Current Projects

We will be unable to finish your audios if you have audios in the Queue. As we were given the sudden closing date, we are unable to work out any FY26 prepayments you may have sent. You will need to contact your financial department for a possible return of unused funds. Any prepayments prior to FY26 will be unable to be returned. Please reach out to Dr. Susan Zickmund regarding this.

New and Future Projects

If you included us in your budgets, you will need to contact your financial departments to have that changed to prevent any issues with FY27.

We understand that this news may be difficult, and we encourage you to also reach out to Dr. Susan Zickmund Susan.Zickmund@va.gov for any questions and concerns.

On behalf of CTSP, I want to thank you for your business and for making us a part of your wonderful research. We wish you all the best in your future works and appreciate your patience and understanding during this difficult time.

Sincerely,
Katie

Kayleen (Katie) Watson

Information Coordinator, Operations & Analytics

Centralized Transcription Services Program

VA Salt Lake City Health Care System

 kayleen.watson@va.gov

 VHASLCCTSP@va.gov

VA Research Administration Updates

Additional Guidance for Research Use of Community Health Summaries and Documents Widget in Joint Legacy Viewer

Background:

In February 2026, individual medical centers issued a notification to JLV users to disable the CHSD widget unless it was being used for treatment purposes. This widget provides real-time access to medical record information from non-VA providers through VA's electronic Health Information Exchange (eHIE). The VA's agreement with the eHIE limits the use of these records to treatment purposes (see VHA Directive 6371). The Office of Research and Development's Privacy Officer, Michelle Christiano, disseminated guidance to Associate Chiefs of Staff for Research, Privacy Officers, and Office of Research Oversight. For treatment studies, CHSD provides an invaluable resource to evaluate eligibility, safety, and outcomes for participants who also use non-VA care. Guidance below describes the steps required to ensure that use of the widget conforms with these requirements.

- 1) Please make any needed updates IRB-approved documents as soon as possible, to ensure compliance.
- 2) Use of this widget may continue while documents are being updated.
- 3) It is required that staff with JLV access disable the CHSD widget when not being actively used.
- 4) For studies where use is inappropriate, study teams should communicate the requirement to disable the widget and discontinue its use. Study teams may evaluate other means for accessing this information, including data sets stored within the Corporate Data Warehouse

Where to document:

- a. Protocol must explicitly reference the use of the CHSD widget in JLV.
- b. HIPAA Waiver must explicitly reference use of CHSD widget. Note that the VA Central IRB has updated the HIPAA Waiver template (Form 103).
- c. Informed consent (with or without embedded HIPAA Authorization language) should include a description of accessing non-VA healthcare records. Template language: "As part of this study, we will monitor your health to ensure the study is safe. We will check your medical records from your non-VA health care provider(s). We can do this through a VA system that communicates directly with your non-VA health care provider(s), like your community doctor's office. The system pulls in your medical records directly from your non-VA provider, and we can only read them; we cannot make any changes."
- d. Standalone HIPAA authorization should have "Non-VA Medical Records" selected.
- e. ERDSP data source should include non-VA medical records. It is recommended to provide a note explaining that the non-VA medical records are accessed through the CHSD widget in JLV and does not require an external Data Use Agree

RCO (Research Compliance Office) Corner

Please contact the RCOs at VHAECHResearchCompliance@va.gov for new research staff related training.

RCO Office Updates:

- ❖ New Research Compliance email:
VHAECH Research Compliance
VHAECHResearchCompliance@va.gov
- ❖ New Research Compliance audit folder for study teams:
\\va.gov\cn\Denver\VHAECH\Research_Data\Research Compliance Audits
- ❖ RCO SharePoint,
<https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/VHAECHCS/Research-Compliance>
- ❖ For any Research Compliance questions, please contact: VHAECHResearchCompliance@va.gov.

RCO (Research Compliance Office) Corner

RCO Audit Assignments beginning June 1, 2026

The Research Compliance Officers have adjusted their audit assignments for this next audit cycle (June 1, 2026 – May 31, 2027). Attached is a list of PIs that shows which RCO is assigned for their study audits. As studies are opened and closed, the list might be adjusted.

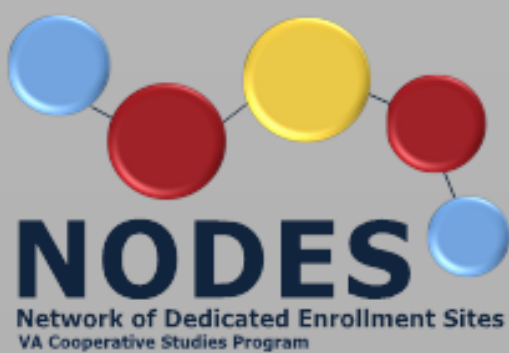
The main difference from previous cycles is that only one RCO is assigned to audit a PI's study(ies). Thus, the PI will only need to work directly with one RCO at a time, regardless of the type of study(ies) for which they are responsible. Moreover, Ms. Cannon and Mr. Kelly are the only RCOs assigned to audit studies involving animals.

The RCOs have developed standard work for their various audit tasks in an effort to standardize and streamline internal processes.

If you, have any questions, please reach out to:
VHAECHResearchCompliance@va.gov.



Adobe Acrobat
Document



What is NODES?

Network of Dedicated Enrollment Sites (NODES) is a consortium of VA Healthcare Systems with teams dedicated to conducting CSP(Cooperative Studies Program) studies to enhance the overall performance, compliance, and local management of CSP multi-site research. Our Aurora NODES team consists of **Dr. Neda Rasouli** and **Dr Gregory Schwartz** (Co-Directors), and **Kimberly Owens** (Associate Director of Operations).

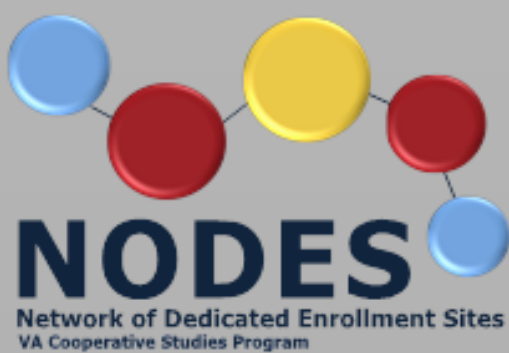
Enrollment & Retention Update

The Aurora NODES CSP study teams continue to set a high bar for enrollment and subject retention:

CSP 2002: Randomized their 100th patient in June 2026 (Study Coordinators: **Theresa Dunn, Anna Duong, Pramod Khanal** / Local Site Investigator **Sridharan Raghavan, MD**)

CSP 2015: Ranked #2 in randomized patient rate over all study sites (Study Coordinator: **Annie Wyrwa, RN** / Local Site Investigator: **Jeanne Feuerstein, MD**)

CSP 2023: Ranked #1 in randomized patients over all Wave 2 sites (Study Coordinator: **Andrea Bovey, RN** / Local Site Investigators: **Ashley Lane, MD & Thomas Rau, MD**)



Congratulations on all your hard work and dedication to our Veteran patients.

New Studies in 2026/2027

We anticipate opening new studies in 2026/2027 pending funding decisions. If you are interested in growing your coordinator career at the VA in a GS-11 level coordinator position, please reach out to Kim Owens at Kimberly.owens9@va.gov.

Questions about NODES? Please contact Kim Owens, NODES Associate Director of Operations, at Kimberly.owens9@va.gov or 720-857-5667.



Grants & Contracts Updates

- We are pleased to share that Kelly Stavneak has joined DRI as a Grants Administrator within the Grants Department. Kelly brings a strong background in nonprofit grants management, along with expertise in organizational processes, internal auditing, and customer service. In her role, she will partner closely with Lexi Davis, Grants Administrator, to support our research teams with pre-award submissions and related activities. We are confident that Kelly's experience and collaborative approach will make her a valuable addition to our team.
- DRI supports three distinct VA systems including: ECHCS in Aurora Colorado, WCHCS in Grand Junction, and the most recent addition, VA Montana. We proudly represent research and education in each system!
- Currently DRI has over 160+ active studies.

Contact cynthia.gasaway@dri-vi.org for more information



Denver Research Institute (DRI), founded in 1997, serves as the fiduciary management non-profit(501c3) organization affiliated with the VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System, Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center, and the VA Western Colorado Health Care System. We are dedicated in supporting physicians, principal investigators, and researchers through their associated educational and scientific endeavors. DRI compliments health and medical care of veterans through the intellectual viability of new and innovative treatments. We are proud to serve our principal investigators, researchers, their staff, and veterans..

Contact Information for DRI Staff

Cynthia (Cindy) Gasaway, DBA, MBA
Executive Director

303-501-0540 office

cynthia.gasaway@dri-va.org

Dr. Gasaway is responsible for overall corporate operations, office management, asset protection, business planning, marketing and public relations, and raising funds for the DRI.

Lexi Davis
Grants & Contracts Administrator
303-501-6946

lexi-davis@dri-va.org or ContractMgmt@dri-va.org

Lexi is responsible for assisting with grants, contracts, and research record retention.

Kelly Stavneak
Grants & Contracts Administrator
Kelly.Stavneak@dri-va.org

Kristen Batcho
Director of Finance
303-501-0882 office

Kristen.Batcho@dri-va.org

Kristen is responsible for overall success of the finance department, including the oversight of all accounting functions necessary to support auditing, payables, receivables, budgeting, forecasting, financial analysis and payroll.

Ifeoma Holder
Budget & Finance Manager
303-501-0622

Ifeoma.Holder@dri-va.org or Accounts.Receivable@dri-va.org

Ifeoma is responsible for accounts receivable, grant accounting, billing, and reporting.

WOC This Way!

With Adriana Herald

Please join us in welcoming Daphenie Tucker as a welcome addition to the Research Administration team.

Please use the group email for timekeeping moving forward: VHAECHResearchTimekeepers@va.gov

Please do not let your WOC status expire! WOC appointment letters are typically valid for 3 years. Take a moment to figure out when your WOC appointment will expire and make a note in your calendar to reach out 4 weeks before. It is MUCH easier to renew a WOC before expiration than to START OVER with a new one after expiration.

***Make sure you access your VA email every 45 days. Important communications & processes, such as accessing the LEAF portal for vaccine registration, are only accessible through VA email. ***

Did your badge die? [NEVER go to badging without contacting Adriana \(Adriana.herald@va.gov \)](#)

New badging office hours are below:

Tues-Fri 7am- 6pm. Last appointment is 5:30pm

The PIV Scheduler located at [Eastern Colorado Health Care System PIV Scheduler \(office365.com\)](#) has been updated to reflect these new extended hours.

With the HRMACS transition, if you have any issues with HR on the 1st floor, please contact Adriana.herald@va.gov

If your badge is expiring soon, contact Adriana to prevent an interruption in workflow. ALWAYS contact us FIRST if you are having badge issues.

Adriana Herald

Adriana.herald@va.gov
VHAECHResearchTimekeepers@va.gov

COMIRB Help Desk:
COMIRB@
ucdenver.edu

Protocol Submission
Assistance:
VHAECHResearchAdmin
@va.gov

Timekeeping:
[VHAECHResearchTime
keepers@va.gov](mailto:VHAECHResearchTimekeepers@va.gov)

RMR VAMC RESEARCH SERVICE

Dr. Robert Keith, MD
ACOS, Research Service

Dr. Pamela Rice, PhD
Deputy ACOS, Research Service
James Hill
Administrative Officer, Research

For general research admin
inquiries, please email:
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Jeannine.espinoza@va.gov