



**Birmingham**  
Research Enhancement Award Program  
Director: Mary T. Hawn, MD, MPH, BS  
**Executive Summary for Fiscal Year 2009**

The Birmingham Center for Surgical and Medical Acute care Research and Transitions (C-SMART). In FY09, we expanded on our prior expertise of promoting collaborations among practitioners, organizational leaders, patients, and health services researchers to generate and apply new implementation knowledge, with a new, specific focus on acute care, advanced illness, and transitions in care. The goals of the C-SMART are to improve hospital-based VA care by: 1) producing evidence on how to implement evidence; 2) developing and implementing innovative partnerships for health services research (HSR) with VA and non-VA partners; 3) building a scholarly, multidisciplinary core of first-rate investigators; and 4) building an exemplary, dynamic infrastructure for HSR in VA.

Birmingham first received funding in July 2002 as a Targeted Research Enhancement Program (TREP) with the goal of becoming a Research Enhancement Award Program (REAP) by 2007. In April 2004, we were awarded the REAP designation three years ahead of schedule, and in 2006 we were approved for five years of continued funding. In January 2007, our center was subject to an administrative suspension that was not lifted until March of 2008. Over the ensuing eighteen months, we have held several strategic planning sessions with our facility, the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) Center for Outcomes and Effectiveness Research and Education (COERE), as well as faculty from the Lister Hill School of Public Health and Center for Health Policy. As a result, we have developed a charter to guide our growth and competitively position our center for the 2012 HSRD Center of Excellence (CoE) solicitation.

We have a new center director, Dr. Mary Hawn, who is a leader in surgery research in the VA. Our facility director, Ms. Rica Lewis-Peyton, has identified growth in research as a top 10 priority for our facility's strategic plan. Specifically, developing C-SMART to be in position for the CoE application in 2012 is a major priority.

Due to our thematic and leadership change, we are in a transition with our center portfolio. We have identified key recruits necessary to make our center productive and our projects consistent with our theme. In conjunction with UAB and the COERE, we have successfully recruited an HSR rheumatologist who will focus on issues related to hip and knee replacement. We are actively recruiting an internist with interest in hospital-based health care delivery, as well as an economist with expertise in cost-effectiveness analyses. We foresee the upcoming year as a period of strategic growth in our new research theme and rebuilding our infrastructure to be more dynamic and responsive to investigators, funding opportunities and our VA leadership. We will build on our prior successful partnerships with Patient Care Services, the Office of Quality and Performance and the National Surgical Quality Improvement Program to expand on prior projects focused on hospital-based care.