**Consortia of Research**

We’re working, really to try and increase the impact of our research, and we’re establishing some Consortia of Research. We call these “CORES”. And we’re modeling these on very successful work we’ve done in funding the Women’s Health Research Network.

There are currently four funded CORES, they include: suicide prevention, access to care, virtual care, pain management, and opioid prescribing and efficacy.

We’re hoping that these CORES can help us do four things. The first is get our hands around our research we’ve been funding; look at what’s been successful, look at where we have gaps, and help us shape a research agenda. And this is to create a network of researchers, so a way that researchers, regardless of where they happen to reside can be connected to their fellow VA researchers who are working in the same area. Learn from them, collaborate with them, coordinate the kinds of questions that they’re asking.

The third element of it is to provide a more coordinated place to connect with our program partners. Partnerships with clinical, program, and policy offices throughout the VA system are an important component of health services research. These relationships can help form a feedback loop, providing input to studies before they’re developed, which improves the implementation and uptake of valid study results throughout the VA system.

So rather than having multiple researchers reaching out to the office of mental health, or the substance use disorder program, trying to discuss or get support for their researchers, we’ll have one sort of gatekeeper to ensure that information was flowing in both directions. That the information from all our partners was getting out to our researchers, and that question from our researchers were flowing back to the partners. So, a more coordinated approach there. And the fourth one was to distill what we’re learning and tell our message more effectively. We do a lot of great research; we work very effectively with our colleagues at CIDER to get that message out.

CIDER is the Center for Information Dissemination and Education Resources. It’s an HSR&D-funded resource center and works to support health services investigators by disseminating researchers and providing educational opportunities for VA investigators and the general public.

But sometimes, what we need, are people and they need support from us, to actually look at our research and synthesize those messages, often with our program partners, for different audiences. Those audiences might include Congress, where we might need to be submitting reports on aspects of our care and our researcher. They may be VA leaders. They may be leaders from researcher funders outside the VA. And they may be our clinicians and Veterans within the VA.

I think one of the things I’ve learned, and believe the most strongly, is that relationships count more than evidence. So, if you have developed—as a researcher—developed a productive working relationship with someone who’s responsible for delivering clinical programs, and you’ve shown that you can be of value to them, and you’ve shown that you understand their constraints and understand their needs, that is worth is 100 articles in the New England Journal. But those relationships don’t happen of themselves. They take time, and we are all busy, if you’re a research hers and you’re responsible for writing proposals and publishing your results, and advancing on your academic career, you need some support to get the breathing space to make time for the clinical program leaders. And the clinical program leaders are busy, so we need to be able to invest resources to make sure that that time that we ask of them is productive. That we can pull together information we can pull together data, and we can actually make the most of their most valuable resource which is their time.

And so the Consortia, in much of the way that our investment in infrastructure at our Centers of Innovation, that’s valuable infrastructure that we hope will make that relationship building more of a natural part of the way we do business.