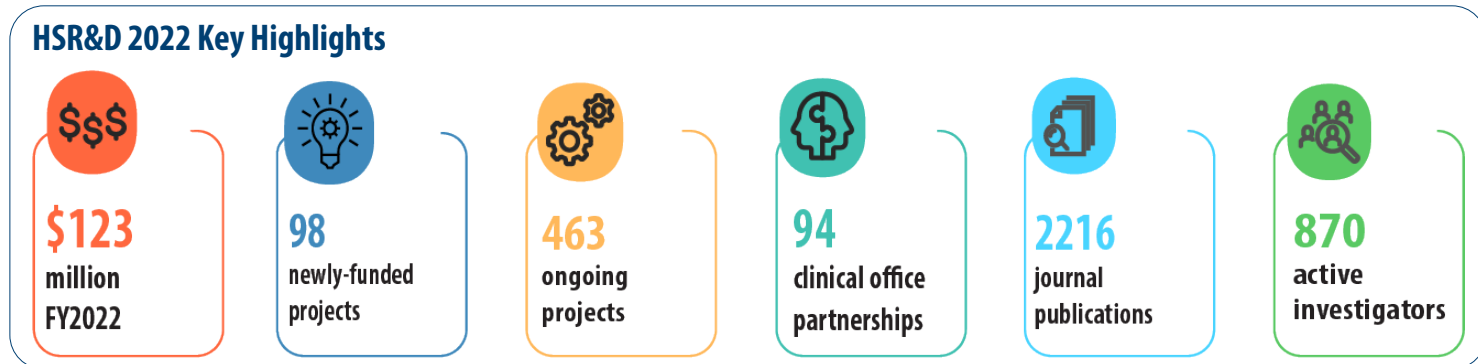


VA Health Services Research & Development Service

2022 Program Impact

HSR&D's mission is to develop, evaluate, and rapidly implement evidence-based strategies that advance the health and care of Veterans. HSR&D pursues research encompassing all aspects of VA healthcare—from delivery, quality, safety, and access to equity, patient satisfaction, and coordination of care—both inside and outside VA.

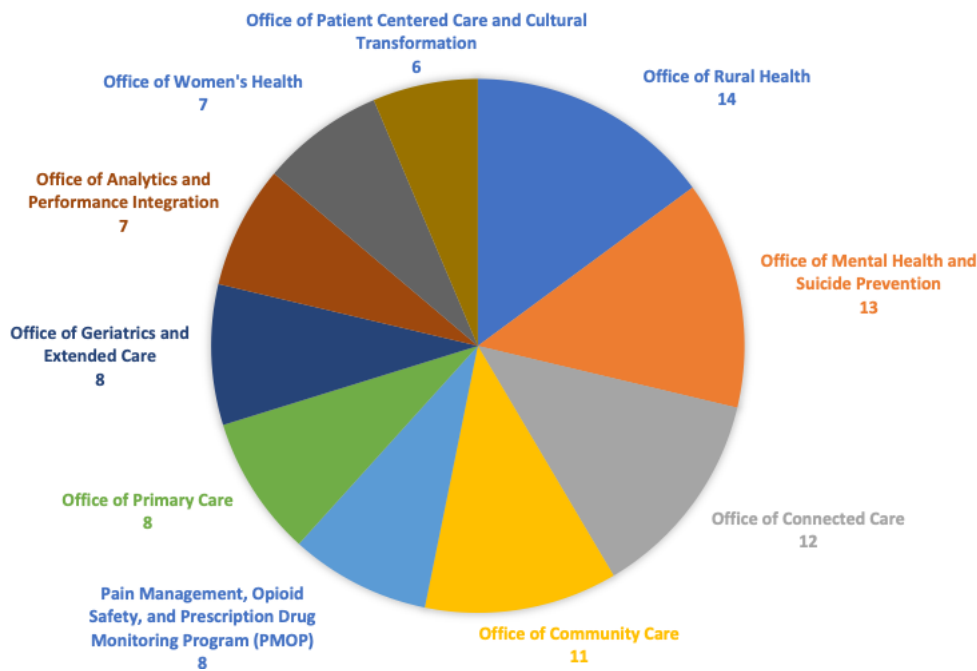
HSR&D 2022 Key Highlights



Key VA Program Office Partnerships

HSR&D investigators partner with VACO Program Offices, VISNs, and VAMCs to ensure that our research and implementation efforts meet the needs of the delivery system and address VA priorities. Below are some of these invaluable program office partnerships and the number of COINs partnering with them. In 2022, HSR&D began 98 priority-area projects, including: 12 on complex chronic care, 9 on mental and behavioral health, 8 on equity, 5 on healthcare informatics, 5 on healthcare organization and implementation, 5 on long-term care and aging, and 4 on women's health.

TOP 10 INVOLVED PARTNERSHIPS



(cont'd)



Achievements in Research

COVID-19

Over the past few years, HSR&D made significant investments in COVID-19 research that was conducted rapidly due to the healthcare crisis affecting Veterans and the public. Results include advances in our understanding of the virus, its variants, available treatments, and outcomes. HSR&D's contributions include:

- **Boosters matter.** A team of researchers from HSR&D's Indianapolis COIN published data in the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report on the effectiveness of two, three, or four vaccine doses on the Omicron and BA.2 variant strains of COVID-19. A third dose of an mRNA vaccine protected all age groups against moderate and severe illness, while a fourth dose added protection for adults 50 and older. This paper resulted in **86 associated news stories** and more than 88,000 views as of 12/29/22.
- **Communication strategies for Veteran acceptance.** A team of HSR&D researchers from San Francisco and Little Rock are conducting a two-year randomized trial titled the "COVID-19 Vaccine Acceptance Study" (COVAcS) to train healthcare providers and staff on using motivational interviewing as a communication strategy to increase COVID-19 vaccine acceptance among Veterans. Thus far, this has been implemented in 10 VAMCs in two VISNs, and **1,418 providers have been trained.**
- **Vaccine effectiveness.** Researchers from Ann Arbor, Portland, and Seattle are part of the [COVID-19 Observational Research Collaboratory](#), which is assessing real-world vaccine effectiveness and outcomes. Findings to date show that in VA patients with comorbidities, the COVID vaccine effectiveness was **69% effective against COVID infection** and **86% effective against COVID-related deaths.** Compared to Veterans who received the Pfizer vaccine, those who received the Moderna vaccine had significantly lower risk of COVID infection. Early associations that were seen between race and urban vs. rural and COVID mortality were erased or reversed by March 2021.
- **Consequences of Long COVID.** Led by an HSR&D investigator, researchers found an increased risk for cardiovascular conditions among Veterans for up to one year following COVID-19 infection. Potentially serious long-term cardiovascular consequences of COVID-19 infection emphasize the importance of getting vaccinated as a way to prevent heart damage. Published in [Nature Medicine](#), findings also alerted healthcare providers to a rise in the burden of cardiovascular diseases and potential long-lasting consequences for patients with COVID-19.

Healthcare Worker Burnout

The COVID pandemic has raised attention to the crisis of burnout in healthcare, especially to concerns that it is fueling early retirements and turnover. However, burnout in healthcare workers predated the pandemic, and is only loosely related to working long hours. Feelings of exhaustion and fatigue were common among clinicians during the pandemic and are part of burnout, but burnout also requires feelings of depersonalization and reduced efficacy. The COVID-19 pandemic is an added stressor to employee attitudes and perceptions about burnout and has impacted employee perceptions about inclusion, diversity, equity and authenticity ([FORUM](#), 2022).

Burnout is particularly high in VA primary care, affecting 45-55 percent of providers. High burnout can be associated with increased turnover, reduced patient safety, poorer quality of care, and worse doctor-patient relationships. Findings from a recent HSR&D study highlighted the challenges associated with maintaining an adequate healthcare workforce. Overall, investigators found that **alignment with VA's patient-centered mission and community-based culture** served important roles in job satisfaction, despite administrative and bureaucratic challenges ([FORUM](#), 2022). HSR&D continues to support research on healthcare worker burnout, and also is part of the Reduce Employee Burnout and Optimize Organizational Thriving ([REBOOT](#)) national initiative to address burnout and promote professional fulfillment among employees.

Evidence Synthesis Program

HSR&D's [Evidence Synthesis Program](#) (ESP) makes high-quality evidence synthesis reports available to VA clinicians, managers, and policymakers as they work to improve the health and healthcare of Veterans. This allows clinical policies to be informed by the evidence—and sets the direction for future research by revealing gaps in the evidence base. In FY2022, ESP produced 29 reports on topics ranging from the "[Safety and Effectiveness of Telehealth-delivered Mental Health Care](#)" to "[Remdesivir for Adults Hospitalized with COVID-19](#)." The most recent ESP systematic review was on "VA versus Non-VA Quality of Care." Investigators identified 46 studies that were relevant to the review: 18 studies that focused on surgical care and 32 studies on non-surgical care. Four studies contributed data to both. Results of the review showed that regarding safety and quality, the great majority of studies found that VA care is as good as or better than care provided in the community.

VA HSR&D 2022 Program Impact

Researchers and Evaluators in Residence Opportunity

Under the VA National and VISN Researchers and Evaluators in Residence ([REiR](#)) Program, HSR&D funds researchers to spend time in clinical programs or VISN offices to help these partners with analysis and to bring research knowledge to policy and program planning. Program or operations offices benefit from advanced analytic expertise and access to research knowledge. HSR&D researchers benefit by increasing their understanding of national policy and operations context and questions that need to be answered. Here are quotes from REiR participants in two projects:

“The overall experience of REiR was excellent. HSR&D provided application review and support for ONS [Office of Nursing Services], and we had excellent individuals from whom to select for implementation. The team met with us routinely to ensure we understood the methods they were undertaking and to ensure fidelity to the question under consideration. ONS appreciated this experience, and we have current plans to apply to the program again. Pandemic notwithstanding, we had an excellent experience with Dr. [Lana] Brown and the team she brought with her to the effort.”

—VA’s Office of Nursing Services

“This experience afforded me the opportunity to connect with a VISN 8 office and obtain an inside perspective on VISN operations and decision-making. Operations is quite different than research, especially as it relates to timing, structure, and objectives. Appreciating both is essential to being a good VA investigator, in my opinion.”

—Dr. Melanie Whittington, PhD, MS, investigator, Denver-Seattle COIN

For more information about the [REiR](#) program, please contact the [Center for Evaluation and Implementation Research](#) at [CEIR@va.gov](#). CEIR provides consultation and support to VA operations leaders to enable scale-up and spread effective policies and practices aligned with VA priorities.

State-of-the-Art Conferences

In 2022, HSR&D held three state-of-the-art conferences on topics key to providing optimal healthcare to Veterans including: [Emergency Medicine](#), [Rural Health](#), and [Virtual Care](#). Various post-conference products are developed to disseminate findings and recommendations throughout the VA healthcare system and beyond. For example, priorities that emerged from the Virtual Care SOTA, which was led by HSR&D’s [Virtual Care Consortium of Research](#), resulted in **three briefs for Congress** and the development of a “Virtual Geriatrics Toolkit.”

Key 2022 Research Findings

Early initiation of prophylactic anticoagulation for Veterans hospitalized with COVID-19 may reduce mortality. (Rentsch et al., [The British Medical Journal](#))

Expanded network access is associated with increased healthcare use among Veterans. (Rose et al., [JAMA Network Open](#))

Receipt of COVID-19 vaccine is higher among racial-ethnic minorities than whites within VA healthcare system. (Haderlein et al., [American Journal of Preventive Medicine](#))

Routine use of remdesivir for COVID-19 may increase length of hospital stay without improving survival. (Ohl et al., [JAMA Network Open](#))

Shared values and VA’s mission-driven culture strengthen VA primary care physician recruitment and retention. (Moldestad et al., [Academic Medicine](#))

Social and behavioral risk factors are not associated with higher mortality among VA patients with COVID-19. (Kelly et al., [JAMA Network Open](#))

Some combat experiences may increase the risk of attempting suicide among service members. (LeardMann et al., [JAMA Network Open](#))

Study suggests routine preoperative screening tests for very low-risk procedures are common and costly for VA. (Harris et al., [Perioperative Medicine](#))

Supplement features HSR&D/QUERI research on suicide prevention for women Veterans. ([Medical Care](#))

VA researchers developed a model to estimate the risk of COVID-19 related deaths among Veterans for possible use in prioritizing vaccine rollout. (Ioannou et al., [JAMA Network Open](#))

Veterans do not always receive appropriate continuation of OUD medications during surgical hospitalizations. (Wyse et al., [JGIM](#))

Veterans are open to discussing firearms storage safety in primary care setting if topic is approached appropriately. (Dobscha et al., [JGIM](#))

VA HSR&D 2022 Program Impact

Major Award Recipients



Keith N. Humphreys, PhD, was awarded the 2021 Under Secretary's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Health Services Research—the highest honor for a VA health services researcher. Over his career, Dr. Humphreys has shed light on several key issues to enhance VA healthcare, including the possibilities and limitations of applying practice guidelines in everyday clinical practice; how self-help groups for addiction disorders can improve treatment outcomes and reduce healthcare costs; and how innovative research methods can aid in assessing outcomes. An HSR&D [Senior Research Career Scientist](#) and investigator with HSR&D's [Center for Innovation to Implementation](#) in Palo Alto, CA, Dr. Humphreys is from a “family of Veterans, including several whose lives were saved by the care they received in our system.”



Stefan Kertesz, MD, MSc, an HSR&D investigator and part of the Birmingham VA Medical Center, Birmingham, AL, received the [SGIM David Calkins Award in Health Policy Advocacy](#), which recognizes the “extraordinary commitment that many members make when they choose to advocate on behalf of SGIM.” One of Dr. Kertesz's primary research focuses is on access to quality addiction and medical care for homeless and other under-served populations. To hear Dr. Kertesz discuss this topic, visit the [HSR&D podcast page](#)

HSR&D Award Recipients

2021 Daniel Deykin Award for Outstanding Mentor



Alison B. Hamilton, PhD, MPH received the 2021 [HSR&D Daniel Deykin Award for Outstanding Mentor](#), which is presented each year to an HSR&D researcher who exhibits outstanding dedication in mentoring the next generation of researchers. A Research Career Scientist with HSR&D's [Center for the Study of Healthcare Innovation, Implementation &](#)

[Policy](#), Dr. Hamilton serves as the Chief Officer of Implementation & Policy, and directs the [EMPOWER QUERI](#) program. Her research priority is improving the health and care of women Veterans. Currently, Dr. Hamilton advises 36 mentees.

2021 Best Paper Award



Liam Rose, PhD, led a Palo Alto-based team that was honored with the 2021 [HSR&D Best Research Paper of the Year Award](#), which honors a single article or collection of articles resulting from one or more HSR&D- or QUERI-funded investigations. Dr. Rose, along with **Marion Aouad, PhD**, **Laura Graham, PhD**, **Lena Schoemaker, MS**, and **Todd**

Wagner, PhD, authored the article, “[Association of Expanded Health Care Networks with Utilization among Veterans Affairs Enrollees](#).” Published in *JAMA Network Open* in October 2021, it reports results from the HSR&D-funded study, [Utilization and Health Outcomes for Veterans with Expanded Health Care Access](#).

2021 Health System Impact Award



Michael Ho, MD, PhD

Michael Ho, MD, PhD and **Makoto Jones, MD, MS**, earned the 2021 [HSR&D Health System Impact Award](#), which honors HSR&D- and QUERI-funded research that has had a direct and important impact on clinical practice or clinical policy within the VA health care system—and that has been successfully translated into VA's policy or operations.



Makoto Jones, MD, MS

Dr. Ho received the award because his research has had a direct and important impact on Veterans' access to care, particularly in regard to reducing wait times. **Dr. Jones** received the award for his achievements in antimicrobial stewardship, infection control, and crucially, in bio-surveillance.