MODULE 1: RESEARCH: WHAT, WHY, AND WHO
ICEBREAKER ACTIVITY
Objectives

• Discuss what research is, and why we do it
• Explain how research fits within VA’s structure and mission
• Define the “players” in research
• Describe the role of Veteran and Care Partner representatives in research
WHAT IS RESEARCH?
Research is a way to answer questions using an organized and systematic approach.
RESEARCH IN THE VA
Why Research is Important to VA

• VA’s mission: To fulfill President Lincoln's promise “To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan” by serving and honoring the men and women who are America’s Veterans.

• VA research is focused on improving the health of Veterans and improving health care for Veterans.
Evidence-based Medicine

- At the VA, it’s important to us that the treatments we provide are based on evidence about what is best for Veterans.
- This evidence comes from research.

D.L. Sackett et al, BMJ 1996; 312: 71-72
Where does Research fit into the VA?
Where does Research fit into the VA?

- Secretary of VA
- Chief of Staff
- Under Secretary for Health
- Deputy Under Secretary for Health Policy and Services
- Chief Research & Development Officer
  - Biomedical Laboratory R&D Service
  - Clinical Science R&D Service
  - Health Services R&D Service
  - Rehabilitation R&D Service
  - Cooperative Studies Program
Durham VA Research Centers

- The VA has several research programs which have different focuses.
  - Biomedical Laboratory R&D Service
  - Clinical Science R&D Service
  - Health Services R&D Service
  - Rehabilitation R&D Service
  - Cooperative Studies Program

- In Durham:
  - Durham Center for Health Services Research in Primary Care
  - The Cooperative Studies Program Epidemiology Center (CSPEC) - Durham
Health Services Research & Development (HSR&D) Centers of Innovation (COINs)

HSR&D focuses on finding and testing strategies for patient care, care delivery, improving Veteran health outcomes, improving healthcare costs, and improving healthcare quality within VA.
Durham HSR&D Research Topics

- Physical activity & diet to help with weight loss
- Counseling to quit smoking
- Improving access to cancer screenings
- Support programs for caregivers
- Peer support for women Veterans at risk for heart disease
- Telemedicine to deliver diabetes care
- …And many more!
Cooperative Studies Program (CSP) Centers

Durham is one of the CSP Epidemiology Centers, which means CSPEC Durham researchers study the health trends and causes of health conditions of Veterans across the country.
CSPEC-Durham Research Topics

✓ Risk factors related to illnesses such as ALS, colorectal cancer, and Gulf War Illness
✓ How to carry out large, national research projects involving Veterans
✓ Gulf War Era Veterans’ thoughts and preferences about research
✓ …And many more!
WHY RESEARCH?
What do these have in common?

- Nicotine Patch
- CAT Scan
- Shingles vaccine
- Successful liver transplant
- Implantable Cardiac Pacemaker
- Powered ankle-foot prosthesis

Shingles vaccine is now available for people age 50 and over. Get yours today!
VA Research Accomplishments!

Shingles vaccine is now available for people age 50 and over. Get yours today!

CAT Scan

Successful liver transplant

Nicotine Patch

Implantable Cardiac Pacemaker

Powered ankle-foot prosthesis
Why research?

Example: Your friend at the gym says that drinking green tea helped him lose weight. Should VA recommend that everyone who wants to lose weight should drink green tea?

Why or Why not?
Why research?

• There are often conflicting ideas about the best way to address a particular problem

• What works for one set of conditions might be ineffective or even dangerous in a different set of conditions
WHO ARE THE PLAYERS?
Who are the players?

- Researchers
  - Principal investigator
  - Co-investigators
  - Special consultants
- Research staff
  - Project managers
  - Interventionists (e.g., nurses, dietitians)
- Participants/patients

- Review boards
  - Grant – reviews and scores grants based on importance and quality
  - IRB – decides whether research adequately protects research subjects
- Other oversight agencies (e.g., FDA)
- Funders (e.g., VHA, NIH, Non-profit foundations)
- Others?
YOU!

You bring the perspective of Veterans
Why might it be helpful to have the voice of Veterans and their care partners in research?
The Spectrum of Veteran Involvement in Research

Traditional Research “Business as usual”

If Veterans give their input, it is as research participants (e.g., in focus groups, surveys)

VetREP

Veterans are advisors who may offer input at one or more times during multiple projects, but do not conduct the research

Participatory Research: Veterans on the research team

Veterans are members of the research team who participate in all parts of the project from start to finish
History of Veteran Engagement in Research

- Early promotion of ideas about “participatory research” and community engagement in research (1960’s-1970’s)
- PCORI and other outside groups ramp up “patient-centered” movement (~2010)
- Some VAMCs start planning Veteran engagement panels
- VA Initiates national “Veteran Engagement Workgroup” to draft guidelines (2015)
- Durham VetREP is formed!! (2016)
Veteran Research Engagement Panel (VetREP) Roles and Responsibilities

By attending regular meetings of the group, Veteran and Care Partner Representatives:

- Provide input on new and current VA research projects
- Review research project materials created for Veterans and their families
- Help make sure the research speaks to Veterans’ concerns
- Help find ways to improve the spread and use of health information
DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

1. What do you hope to get out of participating in this panel?
2. What are you interested in learning more about?
3. What do you want VetREP to accomplish?
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