



The purpose of the Patient Engagement Tracking and Long-term Support (PETALS) initiative is to provide HSR&D investigators nationwide with a resource for developing and implementing programs using automated communication tools to monitor Veterans' health and promote effective behavior changes between face-to-face encounters with their clinical team. PETALS provides programming support and consultation for the development of interventions using interactive voice response (IVR) phone calls and text messaging (SMS). Both IVR and SMS programs can reach the broadest possible group of Veterans, including those without smartphones, limited data plans, and limited comfort with technology. Both communication channels have decades of successfully-implemented programs supporting behavior change and health outcomes for Veterans.

Our goal is to serve HSR&D investigators via project consultation and IVR/SMS program design and deployment consistent with VA data security needs and in a VA-compliant cloud environment. Also, the PETALS staff are available to provide a variety of wrap-around consulting services including boiler plate content for automated messages and grant applications, and advice for making automated communication with Veterans effective and engaging. One-time consultations are welcome; or, we can work with investigators from the inception of an idea through the project lifecycle.

PETALS has been developed in collaboration with experts in telehealth, VA software deployment, and secure data storage both within and outside VA. We expect that the PETALS platform will receive its Authorization to Operate (ATO) for communicating with Veteran patients before the end of 2021.

As VA moves to greater integration with community care and seeks new ways to support Veterans in the safest environments possible, interest in evidence-based strategies for distance communication will continue to grow. PETALS provides HSR&D investigators with a resource for meeting these needs in the context of their research, partnering with technical experts and researchers who have decades of experience in order to design impactful studies that make a difference in Veterans health and healthcare.

*PETALS is directed by John Piette, PhD at the Ann Arbor Center for Clinical Management Research. To learn more about PETALS or start a discussion about a new project idea, contact Nicolle Marinec, MPH (Nicolle.Marinec@va.gov). To view self-guided PowerPoint presentations describing PETALS in more detail, visit the following:*

*<https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/PETALSResource>*