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News Release

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VA Honors Eye Researchers with Olin Teague Award

WASHINGTON – Two researchers for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in Palo Alto, Calif., were recognized with the Olin Teague Award for their research in vision issues that led to improved eye and vision injury examination techniques for Veterans.

"VA has identified these techniques as 'best practices' and now requires eye exams for all patients with traumatic brain injury at VA polytrauma centers," said VA Chief of Staff John Gingrich at the awards ceremony on Capitol Hill.

Gingrich presented Dr. Gregory Goodrich, research psychologist, and Dr. Glenn Cockerham, chief of ophthalmology, with the 2009 Olin Teague Award, a national award that recognizes contributions in an area critical to the rehabilitation and improvement in the quality of life of war-injured Veterans.

The doctors' research began in 2004 when they noticed that soldiers and Marines who were exposed to combat blasts and who sustained traumatic brain injury often had visual disorders and eye injuries that sometimes went undiagnosed. Modern body armor offers improved protection against blasts, but the face remains relatively exposed.

Their research has wider implications for Americans who experience a traumatic brain injury each year whether from stroke, motor vehicle accidents, falls, assaults, or other causes.

"The impact of their research has extended well beyond the VA family to clinicians throughout the country," Gingrich said at the awards ceremony. "The result is that Veterans and non-Veterans alike whose injuries would have gone unnoticed and untreated just a few years ago can now receive the care they need to keep their sight."

The award is named in honor of the late Olin E. Teague, an Army war hero and Texas congressman of 32 years, who spent 18 years chairing the House Veterans Affairs Committee.

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