

Atlanta VAHCS Research & Development Service  
*Research Quarterly*

**SPECIAL RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT**



Jennifer Moore-Simpson

We are deeply saddened to announce the passing of Mrs. Jennifer Moore-Simpson. On Tuesday, January 4<sup>th</sup>, she passed away with her family by her side. Mrs. Moore-Simpson was the Senior Purchasing Agent for the Atlanta VA Research Department and served as a Contracting Officer Representative as well. She played an instrumental role in the success and growth of the Research Department. She served the Research Department for 35+ years. As a purchaser and leader, Mrs. Moore-Simpson successfully advocated for and grew the Purchasing section and always promoted for her colleagues. She knew every aspect of the finances, which is not a surprise. She was excellent in encouraging initiative, innovation, and teamwork. Many have noted that it was always a warm and loving experience to be in her presence, in person or virtually.

She will be missed but never, ever forgotten.

**CONGRATULATIONS – NEW RESEARCH AWARDS!**

Drs. Larry Phillips & Mary Rhee: Cooperative Studies Program (CSP) Network of Dedicated Enrollment Sites (NODES)

Dr. James Bremner: Transcutaneous Vagal Nerve Stimulation in Veterans with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Dr. Hadiyah-Nicole Green: Safety Assessment of Laser Activated NanoTherapy (LANT) as a Potential Treatment for Veterans with Cutaneous Squamous Cell Carcinomas

Dr. Louise Hecker: Aging and ARDS: Novel Mechanistic Role of Nox4/D in Age-Dependent Barrier Dysfunction

Dr. Luke Brewster: Pilot Investigation of Ewing Amputation in Veterans with Peripheral Arterial Disease Undergoing Below Knee Amputation

Dr. Mervyn Weitzmann: BCCMA: Foundational Research to Act Upon and Resist Conditions Unfavorable to Bone (FRACTURE CURB): A stitch in time saves nine!

Dr. Vincent Marconi: Host Genetic and Epigenetic Factors of the Progression, Comorbidities and Outcomes of Viral Infection

Dr. Katie Bales: Investigating the role of retinal astrocytes in exercise-induced retinal neuroprotection

## VETERINARIAN MEDICAL UNIT STAFF



*From left to right: Rodney Parker, Liz Schlosser, Lisa Lefebvre, Tray Holman, Kris Weekes, and Jim McNeill*



### **Liz Schlosser, AAS, RVT, RLAT**

Liz joined the VMU as the Animal Resources Manager in November 2021. Her background in veterinary medicine spans over 10 years and includes: internal medicine, cardiology, oncology, and critical care; shelter medicine at both government and non-profit levels; translational research at T3 Labs (GCMI); and infectious disease research at the CDC. She has worked with many different species over the years from mice and rats to cows, tigers, and non-human primates, though her absolute favorites are the Rhesus macaques, Yorkshire pigs, Egyptian fruit bats, and ferrets. Liz is passionate about laboratory animal welfare and, in 2019, received the Bio-Serv Award for Enhancement or Improvement of Animal Welfare from the Southeastern Branch (SEAALAS) of the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science (AALAS) for her efforts to increase the compliance of non-human primates to cooperatively receive medications.

While at CDC, she also implemented a dental health program for small mammals and non-human primates, and she looks forward to bringing these passions to the VA. Liz received her AAS in Veterinary Technology at Lincoln Memorial University and is currently pursuing her BS at Arizona State University. After hours, Liz is a beekeeper and a plant lover. She enjoys spending time with her family and her Great Dane. Most recently, she is learning skeletal preservation and articulation.

### **Jim McNeill, BS, LATG**

Jim is the Facility Manager for the VMU. He keeps us up and running and helps us stay in compliance with regulations. He has given 48 years of service to the VMU—28 years as a VA employee and 20 years, now, as a Foundation employee. Jim received his BS from Penn State University and maintains his certificate as a laboratory animal technologist. He has had the pleasure of working with many species over his many years in laboratory animal medicine, from small rodents to cats and dogs, pigs and goats to squirrel monkeys. Overall, his favorite animals to work with are the pigs. Jim is widely known around the VA. He carries a wealth of knowledge and enjoys being of service, so it makes sense that the things he most enjoys about working in the VMU are the people, interacting with the VMU staff and the investigators. Outside of work, you will find him walking his Goldendoodle or spending time with his wife enjoying television.

### **Lisa Lefebvre, ALAT**

Lisa is our most-senior Care Technician in the VMU. She has 22 years of service here and is proud to continue making great contributions to our veterans through the research she supports here at the VA. She has seen the VMU through many challenges and despite the challenges faced during the pandemic, she feels a sense of resiliency growing within the facility and has an optimistic outlook for the future of research in the VMU. Lisa spent 15 years at the University of Georgia in avian medicine, primarily working with ostrich and emu but also with small exotic birds, and supervising technicians. Much of her career here has been spent working with mice, dogs, rabbits and pigs; she most enjoys the

rabbits. Lisa has a strong attention to detail and is very skilled in post-operative recovery. In her free time, she enjoys collecting houseplants and paddle-boarding with her rescue dog.

### **Tray Holman, AS**

Tray has been an Animal Care Technician with the VMU for 6 years. Prior to joining the VMU he served the United States Army as a 68T, Animal Care Specialist. During his time there, Tray most enjoyed working with the horses. He attended Gordon State College and received an AS in Social Psychology. Currently, Tray cares for a large population of our mice and enjoys the time he gets to spend with the rats. He knows that even though it may seem an indirect effect, his work has a great impact on medical advancements, understandings, treatments, and outcomes for veterans. Outside of duty hours, Tray can be found on and off the field, playing football, basketball, and baseball; as well as coaching all three sports in children's recreational leagues. He truly enjoys mentoring kids to help them achieve their dreams and build strong futures.

### **Rodney Parker, MA**

Rodney joined the VMU in November 2020. He comes to us with a combined 10 years of laboratory technician and animal care technician experience with Emory's School of Medicine. He takes great pride in the care that he gives to our animals and feels a great responsibility for their well-being. Rodney most enjoys working with chickens in a lab setting, though lampreys and other aquatics run a close second. Prior to beginning a career in research, Rodney attended the University of Buffalo where he studied political science and obtained a MA in History. Outside of work, he spends his time raising giant breed dogs, many types of fish, coral, reptiles, and amphibians. He is a devoted grandfather and family man.

### **Kris Weekes, BS**

Kris began his time at the VMU 8 months ago. As our sole cage-wash technician, he is swiftly learning the importance of his position and the huge impact it can have on the overall health of the animals in our care as well as the research being conducted. He really enjoys learning about the research projects pursued in the VMU and having the chance to participate in research activities. Kris came to us after doing animal care work for a petting zoo and working mainly with goats. He has a BS from Fort Valley State University in Animal Science and had the opportunity to work with snakes and frogs in a research setting during his time there. His true interests lie in herpetology. In his free time, Kris can be found consuming media in different formats. He enjoys reading, devours movies, and is dabbling in software design.

## **FEATURED VA RESEARCH STAFF**

### **VAIRRS Ambassador - Atlanta**



Throughout the VAIRRS transition, the Atlanta VA has been recognized as a top-performing VAIRRS site - serving as a great model for others to follow.

Kallie Medbery, the R&D Coordinator at the Atlanta VA, reported on the site's experience, challenges, and success throughout the VAIRRS implementation process.

The Atlanta VAHCS has an extensive research program with over 400 studies, including 300+ studies conducting human research. As one of the first sites to get on board, Atlanta was a part of the Tier 1 sites to transition to VAIRRS and is currently conducting all local research committee reviews and facility PO and ISSO reviews within the IRBNet system.

Medbery stated, "We found success during the transition by starting with a phased rollout and regularly communicating with our investigators as we implemented each new element of the software."

The site created a dedicated space on their facility webpage to store all communications and guidance documents for easy reference (Research - IRBNet/VAIRRS Guidance - Atlanta VA Health Care System) to facilitate employee experience throughout the transition. In addition to the guidance documents, Atlanta created submission checklists for each of their

external IRBs, which they store in their local libraries in IRBNet. According to Medbery, the site "found these checklists to be instrumental in assisting the investigators with tracking the varying requirements and procedures for each IRB."

*We applaud your commitment to VAIRRS & encourage other sites to follow suit to optimize all that IRBNet has to offer!*

## WHAT'S NEW WITH THE CVNR?



Intent to fund!  
 Grant: VA RR&D SPiRE  
 PI: Shan Ping Yu, MD, PhD  
 Project: Innovative memantine therapy for neuroprotective effects against ischemic stroke and Alzheimer's disease

The CVNR Connectivity Core has joined with veterans, community partners, VA employees, and research participants to form the Community Advisory Panel (CAP). The CAP's focus is "Engage, Influence, and Direct" via initiatives including community outreach, accessibility, and opportunities to provide feedback on new research.



The What's on 12? Initiative was developed to increase awareness of the CVNR's presence on the Atlanta VA's 12th floor. "What's on 12?" buttons were distributed along with an "elevator speech" script to help with information sharing.

## WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE FOUNDATION FOR ATLANTA VETERANS EDUCATION AND RESEARCH (FAVER)?

### Did you Know?

Did you know that FAVER displays a collection of featured research projects on its website? On a biannual basis, FAVER updates the featured projects displayed on its website to promote some of the high-quality investigators and their programs at the Atlanta VA. Please visit <https://faver.foundation> or <https://faver.foundation/latest-news/featured-projects/> to view some of the exciting work conducted by your colleagues at our VA. FAVER also maintains an archive of previous versions of the featured projects. To view the Previously Featured Projects, please visit <https://faver.foundation/latest-news/previously-featured-projects/>.

### Greetings to New Faces

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter in FY22, FAVER welcomed the following new employees:

Name	PI
GianMarco Douglas	Jeff Boatright, PhD
Elizabeth "Liz" Schlosser	George Lathrop, DVM

### Employee Appreciation

Thank you to all FAVER employees for your contributions and dedication to the VA/FAVER research and education missions. And congratulations to the following employees celebrating anniversaries during the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of FY22:

Years	Name
5-10	Theron Clark-Stuart (5 Years) Derek Key (5 Years) Sridhar Tanukonda (7 Years)
1-5	Joy Burnette (1 Year) Edwin "Clayton" Carruth (1 Year) Rayna Ceaser (1 Year) Shenique Harmon-Anthony (3 Years) Justin Johnson (1 Year) Asmith Joseph (1 Year)

## UPDATED FEATURED RESEARCH POSTERS

On the 1st floor of the medical center near the Outpatient Pharmacy there are several posters on display featuring the research projects of some of our investigators. If you're in the area, please take a couple of minutes to view the posters and recognize the work of your colleagues. The posters currently on display include research from the following PIs: **Jeffrey Boatright, PhD, Luke Brewster, MD, Jeanie Park, MD, Charles Searles, MD, William Shafer, PhD, Amit Shah, MD, Camille Vaughan, MD.**

## FEATURED PROJECTS

Did you know that FAVER displays a collection of featured research projects on its website? On a biannual basis, FAVER updates the featured projects displayed on its website to promote some of the high-quality investigators and their programs at the Atlanta VA. Please visit <https://faver.foundation> or <https://faver.foundation/latest-news/featured-projects/> to view some of the exciting work conducted by your colleagues at our VA. FAVER also maintains an archive of previous versions of the featured projects. To view the Previously Featured Projects, please visit <https://faver.foundation/latest-news/previously-featured-projects/>.

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

FAVER has added a new resource for PIs on its website, Extramural Funding Opportunities (<https://faver.foundation/pi-resources/funding-opportunities/>). This page provides links to non-VA funded grant opportunities.

If you are interested in submitting an application/proposal through FAVER, please contact Marcia Weese, [marcia.weese@va.gov](mailto:marcia.weese@va.gov) or 404.321.6111 ext. 127897.

If you want to learn more about FAVER, visit [www.faver.foundation](http://www.faver.foundation) or contact Leslie Hughes, [lhughes@faver.foundation](mailto:lhughes@faver.foundation) or 404.321.6111 ext. 122535.

## CENTRAL OFFICE DEADLINES

---

Research Service	Deadline
BLR&D/CSR&D Merit & CDA	03.08.2022

---

## R&D DEADLINES

---

Month	IRBNet R&D Package Submission Deadline	R&D Meeting Date
March	02.23.2022	03.02.2022
April	03.30.2022	04.06.2022
May	04.27.2022	05.04.2022
June	05.25.2022	06.01.2022

---

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

---

Bajema KL, Dahl RM, Evener SL, et al. Comparative Effectiveness and Antibody Responses to Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccines among Hospitalized Veterans — Five Veterans Affairs Medical Centers, United States, February 1–September 30, 2021. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2021;70:1700–1705. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7049a2>

---



Kopacz, M. S., Bishop, T. M., Ayre, A., Boska, R. L., Goldstrom, D., Tomberlin, D., Baxter, S., Dunlap, S., & Harris, J. I. (in press). Feasibility of Using Moral Injury Screening Instruments in VA Chaplaincy Spiritual Assessments. *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy*.

## JOB OPPORTUNITIES

<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Location</b>
FAVER Positions	<a href="#">FAVER Job Announcements</a>
Program Support Assistant	Announcement Pending
Research Nurse (CSP 2002)	If interested, please contact <a href="mailto:Ashley.Scales@va.gov">Ashley.Scales@va.gov</a>
Research Assistant (CSP 2002)	If interested, please contact <a href="mailto:Ashley.Scales@va.gov">Ashley.Scales@va.gov</a>
Research Data Analyst	If interested, please contact <a href="mailto:Ashley.Scales@va.gov">Ashley.Scales@va.gov</a>
Health Science Specialist, CSP NODES	If interested, please contact <a href="mailto:Ashley.Scales@va.gov">Ashley.Scales@va.gov</a>