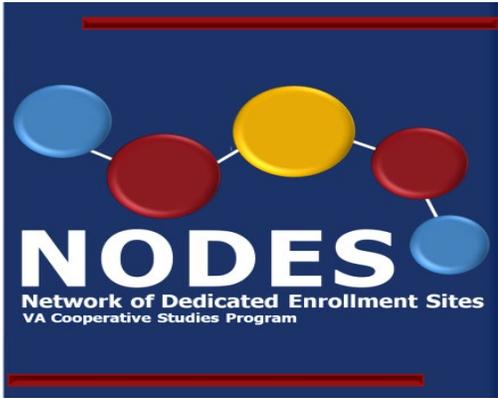


Atlanta VAHCS Research & Development Service
Research Quarterly

SPECIAL RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT



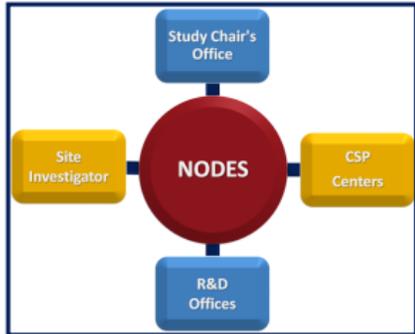
The Atlanta VA became a Cooperative Studies Program Network of Dedicated Enrollment Sites (CSP NODES) in FY22. CSP NODES is a consortium of VA medical centers with teams and nodes dedicated to conducting CSP studies to enhance the overall performance, compliance, and management of CSP multi-site research. In addition, NODES work together to share best practices and provide local insights to CSP Central Office and CSP Centers on study design and related considerations that can help with study management and conduct. Further, each node helps to create a stronger local community of clinical research.

Network of Dedicated Enrollment

NODES ELEMENTS

CSP COLLABORATION

NODES works with key stakeholders throughout the lifecycle of a study.



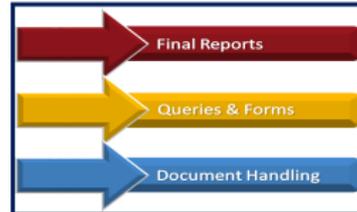
SITE INITIATION

NODES helps identify ways to reduce logistical and staffing barriers.



STUDY CLOSE-OUT

NODES provides direction on local site facilitation of closing out a study.



STUDY DESIGN AND PLANNING

NODES provides recommendations from the site perspective.



ACTIVE STUDY PHASE

NODES provides guidance to CSP study teams to achieve site success.



COMMUNITY NETWORKING

NODES strives to build a stronger clinical research environment.



NODES METHODS & TOOLS

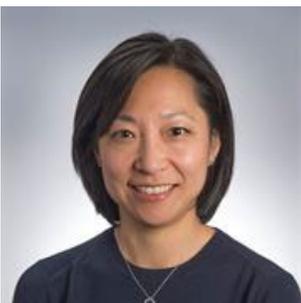
Aiming to support the execution, logistics, efficiency, management, experience, network, teamwork and standards of VA Clinical Trials.

Lawrence Phillips, MD



Dr. Larry Phillips is the Co-Director of the Atlanta CSP NODES. His clinical research activities currently span proteomics to state-of-the-art metabolic assessment of insulin secretion and sensitivity, epidemiology, medical economics, improvement of health care delivery, and development of strategies to detect diabetes pathophysiology early in its natural history. In recent years, he analyzed decision-making and identified that diabetes therapy was often not intensified despite high glucose levels. Dr. Phillips developed novel strategies that help improve diabetes management in primary care settings. He is now involved in a new research thrust to develop accurate, convenient, inexpensive screening to detect prediabetes. His current work at Emory and the VA is aimed at revolutionizing diabetes care by permitting a focus on the earliest stages of glucose intolerance when preventive treatment is most effective and least expensive.

Mary Rhee, MD, MSCR



Dr. Mary Rhee is the Co-Director of the Atlanta CSP NODES. Her research focuses on: (a) improving diabetes care by identifying barriers to health care access, and (b) decreasing the morbidity/mortality of diabetic complications by identifying patients at risk (i.e. impaired glucose tolerance [IGT]) and treatment options that may prevent or delay the development of both diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Brianna Wong



Brianna Wong is the Acting Associate Director of Operations (ADO) and Enrollment Manager of the Atlanta CSP NODES. Brianna graduated with a B.S. from Kennesaw State University in 2010. She started working with the Atlanta VA Research Program in 2015 and is a Certified Clinical Research Coordinator with over 12 years of experience in clinical research (7+ years of CSP study experience), from phase 0/1 through phase 4 in pediatric through geriatric populations. Brianna's role within the NODES program is to serve as a content expert, mentor, and trainer. She strives to ensure program efforts in quality assurance, operations, and enrollment. In her spare time, Brianna enjoys spending time with her husband and 2 children (4 years old and 7 years old) and relaxing by the pool or a beach.

WELCOME NEW RESEARCH OFFICE STAFF

Renee Shaw, JM



Renee N. Shaw, JM, is a 2020 graduate of Emory University School of Law with a specialty in Health Care Regulation and Patent Law. She has an extensive service history in Emory's School of Medicine, Spelman College Dept. of Chemistry and Emory's Office of Technology Transfer. Renee also possesses a BS in Zoology from Iowa State University, a BS in Information Technology from DeVry University, and is currently completing an MPH from Emory's School of Public Health. Her research interests include intellectual property, technology transfer, cancer biology, and health policy. When the opportunity arises, Renee enjoys dancing Argentine Tango and indoor sky diving.

Ghazal Ahmadi-Izadi



Ghazal Ahmadi-Izadi has been with the Atlanta VA since June 2016 and has worked on several clinical research teams since joining the Research Department. She has worked on research projects involving gastroenterology, infectious diseases, and VA genomic biorepository research. Her positive interactions in research made her determined to continue to establish connections with veterans and research staff while making a positive impact along the way. In her leisure time, she enjoys indoor gardening and traveling to new places with her husband. She also owns an elderly cat named Laila who enjoys having long conversations before her mealtime. Ghazal is thrilled to have the opportunity to contribute to the Atlanta VA CSP NODES.

FEATURED VA RESEARCH STAFF

Anant Madabhushi, PhD



Dr. Anant Madabhushi is a new Research Health Scientist at the Atlanta VA and Professor of Biomedical Engineering, with secondary appointments in Biomedical Informatics, Radiology and Imaging Sciences, and Pathology at Emory University. Dr. Madabhushi recently moved to Atlanta from Cleveland. He received his Masters' in Biomedical Engineering from the University of Texas, Austin in 2000, and in 2004 he obtained his Ph.D. in Bioengineering from the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Madabhushi is the author of more than 275 peer-reviewed journal articles, over 200 peer-reviewed conference papers, 6 books, more than a dozen book chapters, and over 300 peer-reviewed scientific abstracts. Many of his publications have appeared in high impact journals such as Nature Rev Drug Discovery, Nature Rev Clin Oncology, and Lancet Oncology. His research has gained international attention and resulted in several awards and accolades including being named a Wallace H. Coulter Fellow, a fellow of the American Institute of Medical and Biomedical Engineering (AIMBE), a Fellow of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), and a fellow of the National Academy of Inventors (NAI). His work on developing “smart computers for identifying lung cancer patients who will benefit from chemotherapy” was ranked as one of the top 10 medical breakthroughs of 2018 by Prevention Magazine. In 2021, Case Western Reserve University awarded him their highest research accolade - the Faculty Distinguished Research Award - for his work in Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Dr. Madabhushi has emerged as a pioneer in the development and application of novel and interpretable AI algorithms for disease diagnosis, prognosis, and prediction of treatment response for a variety of diseases including several cancers, cardiovascular, kidney, and eye disease. Veterans, in many cases on account of their exposure to wartime environments and particular lifestyle choices, engender different disease phenotypes compared to the civilian population. Over the last three years, he has been optimizing and tailoring AI tools to address problems in precision medicine for Veterans. While his primary focus has been on diagnosis, prognosis, and prediction of treatment response of lung, oropharyngeal, breast, and prostate cancers for the Veteran population, he is also focused on translating and deploying these clinical decision support tools across VA stations and VISNs so that Veterans can experience precision medicine across different diseases.

Dr. Madabhushi's research within the VA began in 2019 with a VA Merit award (I01BX004121) focused on AI-based lung cancer screening for VA patients, specifically helping to discriminate malignant from benign nodules on routine CT scans. This work has led to the development of imaging biomarkers for predicting responses to immunotherapy for lung cancer patients. More recently in a paper just published in the J of Immunotherapy for Cancer, Dr. Madabhushi's group demonstrated the utility of radionics on CT scans to identify clinical assays for Stage III lung cancer patients treated with chemo-radiation therapy and immunotherapy. Interestingly, the work showed that a subset of patients identified by his AI-based approach might be able to avoid chemo-radiation therapy and hence the associated toxicity. Similarly, his team has been developing and applying AI tools both for digital pathology as well as radiology scans for risk stratification of oropharyngeal cancers within the VA.

To expand his work and footprint within the VA, he and his team received funding support (in 2021) from the Cooperative Services Program to create a VA Hub for Computer Vision and Machine Learning in Precision Oncology (CoMPL). This new VA Hub will create computer vision and machine learning (CVML) tools for addressing cancer diagnosis, prognosis, risk stratification, and prediction of treatment response in the VA population. An initial demonstration project of CoMPL will focus on the application of AI tools with CT scans and digital pathology images to identify the benefit of adjuvant chemotherapy in early-stage lung cancer among Veteran patients. Dr. Badi El-Osta is also leading a new prostate cancer collaborative involving urologists, radiologists, and oncologists from multiple different VA stations and VISNs to develop the use of AI with multimodal imaging (MRI and digital pathology) along with genomics for more accurate risk stratification of Veterans with high-risk prostate cancer.

ATLANTA VA CDA QUARTERLY MEETING

The Atlanta VA Research & Development Department is excited to announce CDA Quarterly Meetings. We hosted our first meeting on Monday, October 3, 2022. This is a one-hour meeting held 3-4 times per FY. The quarterly meeting will provide an opportunity for all current and interested CDA applicants to:

1. Ensure regular opportunities for meaningful interactions between CDAs, mentors, and research leadership.
2. Regularly assess progress toward publications, grant applications, and other career development activities.
3. Identify concerns regarding protected time, mentorship, research plans, resources, or career development.
4. Provide a forum for open discussion of sensitive/difficult topics.

If you or anyone you know is interested in being a part of this group, please reach out to Ashley.Scales@va.gov.

WHAT'S NEW WITH THE CVNR?

Effective October 1, 2022, CVNR Leadership duties will be as followed:

Joe Nocera, PhD



Dr. Joe Nocera is the Interim Executive Director; his research has predominantly focused on understanding the intersection of physical and cognitive functioning in older adults and patients with neurological diseases. For the last 10 years, Dr. Nocera has focused on examining longitudinal changes in mobility and executive functions brought on by aging, neurological disease, and/or I interventions, specifically aerobic exercise. He has recently begun collaborating with other doctors on cancer and cancer-related treatments that impact both physical and cognitive functioning and how exercise can lessen decline.

Walter Royal, MD



Dr. Walter Royal is the Interim Associate Medical Director; his research focuses on molecular, structural, and behavioral studies of a non-infectious transgenic rat model of HIV-1 infection, which abnormalities that occur in humans, including cognitive impairment, sex/gender differences on the risk of NCI and the underlying mechanisms, and mechanisms of addiction and interactions with HIV-related effects on the brain.

Jeffrey Boatright, PhD



Dr. Jeffrey Boatright is the Assistant Director of the CVNR; currently, Dr. Boatright is exploring whether physiological preconditioning stressors such as bright light, whole-body exercise, and mild hypoxia/ischemia elevate DNA repair rates, also funded by an NEI RO1. This has led to separate projects testing the effects of exercise in rodent models of retinal degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, and glaucoma. Some of this work has extended to testing the effects of exercise on visual functions in humans, a project supported by individual and program grants from the Veterans Administration.

Machelle Pardue, PhD



Dr. Machelle Pardue is the Director of Scientific Programs of the CVNR; her lab is focused on developing novel screening and treatment strategies for people with vision loss. Her experience as a VA Research Scientist has given her an appreciation for the importance of translational research and the need to rapidly move treatments from the benchtop to the bedside. She is currently pursuing both pre-clinical and clinical studies to move treatments for retinal disease into the clinic. Her lab focuses on three main areas of research: neuroprotective strategies to slow the retinal disease and preserve retinal function, detection and treatment of diabetic retinopathy, and environmental influence on optical development of the eye. Her research has been continuously funded through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), NIH, and private companies.

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

Veterans Day Appreciation



Greetings to New Faces



FAVER is delighted to welcome Rosa Scott as the new Accounting & HR Assistant. Rosa joins our team with over 20+ years of experience.

Please help us welcome Rosa to the team!

FAVER welcomed the following new employees:

Name	PI
Joy Burnette	Ashish Mehta
Yang "Sara" Kim	Anna Woodbury
Angelo Marra	Xiangqin Cui
Rosa Scott	Leslie Hughes
Karlye Phillips	Camille Vaughan
Hillary Rowe	Leslie Hughes

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:

Years	Name
21-25	Leslie Hughes (23 Years) James McNeill (21 Years) Linda Skinner Frazier (22 Years)
16-20	Ellen Schneider (16 Years)
6-10	Tasha "Steph" Raines (9 Years) Carol Ann White (7 Years)
1-5	Stacy Carswell (5 Years) Katherine "Gracie" Chambers (2 Years) Rachel Davis (3 Years) Taylor Eisenstein (2 Years) Jennifer Gillespie (1 Year) Brittany Martin (1 Year) Perry McDaniel (5 Years) Savitha Shivaraj (1 Year) Gillian Smith (4 Yearso Teclmicael Tewolde (1 year) Krostpher Weekes (1 Year)

R&D DEADLINES

Month	IRBNet R&D Package Submission Deadline	R&D Meeting Date
December	11/23/2022	12/07/2022
January	01/04/2023	01/18/2023
February	01/18/2023	02/01/2023

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Job Title	Location
FAVER Positions	FAVER Job Announcements
Post-Doc (BLRD)	If interested, please contact Ashley.Scales@va.gov
Research Nurse	If interested, please contact Ashley.Scales@va.gov
Budget Analyst	USAJobs Announcement Pending
Purchasing Agent	USAJobs Announcement Pending
Science Information Officer	USAJobs Announcement Pending