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National Academies affirms scientific necessity of VA canine research

WASHINGTON – A National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) [study](#) has affirmed the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) position that canine research is “scientifically necessary” for certain areas of research that benefit seriously disabled Veterans.

An independent committee assembled by NASEM to examine the issue determined that use of canines is necessary for VA research into spinal cord injury and heart disease and will need to continue for the foreseeable future. It also found that current VA animal research programs are meeting and exceeding all federal regulations and guidelines.

The study was commissioned by VA to provide an independent, rigorous and unbiased look at how the ethics of research with animals, together with scientific principles, must inform the process of determining what research to conduct. The study will help ensure that the debate surrounding this issue is grounded in careful analysis, scientific consensus and facts.

“This study confirms what we’ve said all along: at this point canine research is the only viable option for developing and testing certain treatments to improve the quality of life of some seriously disabled Veterans,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie.

VA canine research has led to the development of the cardiac pacemaker (1950s), liver transplantation (1960s), the use of ablation to treat cardiac arrhythmias (late 1990s-early 2000s) and improved techniques for hip replacement surgery (1990s).

Most recently, [canine research in Cleveland](#) involving VA researchers led to the development of a device that allows paralyzed patients to breathe without a ventilator, cough independently and communicate with a stronger voice. This device gave Veterans increased independence and significantly reduced respiratory infections and hospitalizations.

VA has reduced its use of canines in research to the absolute minimum required at this time to fulfill its commitment to finding treatments for Veterans with life-threatening health conditions.

But VA has supported this type of research for decades and continues to do so because it is absolutely necessary to better treat life-threatening health conditions in our Veterans.

To see how canine research benefits Veterans, see [here](#).

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