

**Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
Veterans Health Administration (VHA)**

**Responses to the Spring 2023 Recommendations
Geriatrics and Gerontology Advisory Committee (GGAC)**

1. GGAC appreciates the VA’s commitment to the aging Veteran population and research and strongly recommends the area of Aging, Geriatrics, and Geroscience be one of the Portfolios in the Office of Research Development (ORD) reorganization. Given its cross-cutting nature, GGAC believes it could be a Broad Portfolio, but if not, at least a Managed Portfolio. In addition, regardless of other aspects of the reorganization there should be consistent aging research expertise presence on the review committees.

VA Response: Concur Concur in Principle Non-concur

VA Action Plan to Recommendation 1:						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Office	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status	Contact Person
1. Office of Research and Development (ORD) has a plan to commence with broad and actively managed portfolios as pilots during fiscal year (FY) 2024. Medical Health and Aging has been tentatively identified as a broad portfolio for this pilot.	Office of Research and Development (14RD)	Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care (12GEC)	1. Timeline designing and testing phase to conclude April 2024. Implementation October 1, 2024.	10/1/2024	In Progress	Holly Krull
			2. GEC to continue service on Investigator Scientific Review & Management (ISRM) initiative development group.	9/30/2024	In Progress	Marianne Shaughnessy

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ORD is working with multiple program offices, including Geriatrics and Extended Care (GEC), as they examine how current research resources are utilized and develop portfolios that reflect VA priorities. Aging has been combined with Medical Health research in a broad portfolio. Additional funding for aging investigators may be found in another broad portfolio focused on Brain and Behavioral Health. The tentative organization of this work was piloted in FY 2023 and is set to implement in FY 2024. Evaluations will be ongoing to assess efficiency, cost and effectiveness of the new organizational design.

- GGAC recognizes the challenges in bringing on a new EHR and recommends that broad input be sought from programs such as the GRECCs, MIRECCs, COINs, and other VAMCs with strong research programs and special clinical program development as the new EHR structures are considered. The initial pilot VAMCs did not have such programs. Input on the unique clinical and programmatic aspects of geriatric care is critical in providing high quality care to the older Veteran population.

VA Response: Concur Concur in Principle Non-concur

VA Action Plan to Recommendation 2:						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Office	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status	Contact Person
1. Addressing New Service Request #20211219.	Electronic Health Record Modernization (EHRM)	GEC	1. Dr. Edes continues to chair the Geriatric Council for EHRM.	4/30/2024	In Progress	Dr. Thomas Edes

The Committee’s attention to the research mission in the context of EHRM is appreciated. The GEC EHRM Council began working with the Geriatric Research, Education, and Clinical Centers (GRECC) on the capabilities needed by GRECCs in 2019, and escalated efforts after Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center (Spokane) transitioned to the new Federal Electronic Health Record (FEHR), in late 2020. For the reasons delineated, when it became evident that the

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required capabilities were not available, the GEC EHRM Council reached out to Mental Health; the Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Centers (MIRECC); Neurology for Parkinson’s Disease Research, Education, and Clinical Centers (PADRECC); and the Research Council. The GEC EHRM Council led a cross-council effort and submitted a New Service Request (NSR), in December 2021, on “Local agility and flexibility needed in the FEHR for innovation, quality improvement, clinical demonstrations, and research.” In February 2023, through the cross-council prioritization process, this NSR was prioritized as 24 among 280 NSRs deemed both a high-patient safety risk and required before the first Level 1 facility could transition to the new FEHR. Although the timelines and resource limitations remain challenging, encouraging changes are underway in our renegotiated EHRM contract, accountability and distribution of responsibilities between VA and Oracle-Cerner. During our current EHRM reset, we are focused on addressing all unmet needs of the first five GoLive sites, preparing for the Federal Health Care Center (North Chicago VA and its combined Department of Defense health care facility) to transition to the new FEHR, and restructuring our EHRM system. This restructuring places the GEC EHRM Council directly under the Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Patient Care Services; adds considerable supportive elements to the Councils, including Office of Health Informatics and Office of Information and Technology; and will accelerate resolution of the high-priority NSRs, including NSR 20211219, which will specifically address the needs of GRECCs, MIRECCs, PADRECCs and the innovation and research activities crucial to VA as a continuous learning health system.

3. GGAC appreciates the efforts from the Geriatric Scholars program in training and developing a geriatric workforce and recommends finding mechanisms to maintain the funding for the program which has by all accounts been quite successful and is under threat of significant constriction because of funding cuts from the Office of Rural Health.

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VA Action Plan to Recommendation 3:						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Office	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status	Contact Person
1. Seek alternative sources of funding to make up anticipant shortfalls in funding for Geriatric Scholars Program.	Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care (12GEC)	Patient Care Services (12PCS)	1. Submit draft budget to maintain and expand Geriatrics Scholars Program for VA CAREERS Bill under consideration in current Congressional session.	5/1/2023	Completed	Marianne Shaughnessy
			2. Develop and submit Unfunded Request for Geriatric Scholars Program to Patient Care Services for funding consideration.	9/30/2023	Developed and submitted to GEC ELT	Marianne Shaughnessy

GEC submitted a draft budget for maintenance and expansion of Geriatric Scholars, when prompted by calls from Congress for geriatric training for VA employees in the VA CAREERS Bill, currently pending in the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Additionally, GEC prepared an Unfunded Request to submit to Patient Care Services for additional funding, to address the budget shortfall predicted for FY 2024 and beyond.

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4. GGAC recognizes the VA's priority for addressing health disparities in its Veteran population and recommends Geriatrics and Extended Care integrate consideration of health disparities in older Veterans and include diversity, equity and inclusion in GEC metrics across all the programs.

VA Response: Concur Concur in Principle Non-concur

VA Action Plan to Recommendation 4:						
Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Office	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status	Contact Person
1. GEC concurs with the interest and is exploring resources, available data and identifying gaps to develop the needed metrics.	Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care (12GEC)	Office of Health Equity (OHE)	1. Meet with OHE to identify current available data and location in VA databases to harvest and include in GEC Program dashboards.	1/30/2024	In Progress	Dr. Scotte Hartronft
			2. Review current GEC data sources and include health equity information in each program's dashboard development.	4/30/2024	In Progress	Dr. Scotte Hartronft