

THE AMERICAN GERIATRICS SOCIETY

350 FIFTH AVENUE, SUITE 801, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10118 TEL: 212-308-1414 FAX: 212-832-8646

www.americangeriatrics.org



JENNIE CHIN HANSEN
Chief Executive Officer

April 22, 2011

Dear Member of Congress:

The American Geriatrics Society (AGS), an organization of over 6,000 geriatrics healthcare professionals, and basic and clinical researchers specializing in aging, respectfully requests your strong support for increased funding for the Veterans Affairs Office of Research and Development (VA ORD) in FY 2012.

As a member of the Friends of the VA Medical Care and Health Research (FOVA), a diverse coalition of more than 80 national academic, medical and scientific societies, voluntary health and patient advocacy associations and industries that advocate appropriate funding for the health programs that serve the nations veterans, **AGS asks that VA ORD receive \$620 million in FY 2012.** Alternatively, we ask that you fund the VA ORD at no less than the \$581 million in funding that Congress provided in FY 2010.

While we fully recognize the fiscal challenges facing our nation, we also recognize that sustained and enhanced federal investments in VA research are absolutely essential to the delivery of high quality, coordinated and efficient care to our nation's veterans. The VA Office of Research and Development aims to improve the health of our veterans and lay the groundwork for improved patient care within the VA -- the largest managed health care system in the nation. Nearly 50% of the VA's active patient population, numbering close to 6 million, is over age 65, and close to 1 million are over age 85.

We are concerned that the President's proposed budget for FY 2012 requests \$509 million to fund the VA medical and prosthetic research program - a decrease of \$72 million under the FY 2010 level. If enacted, the proposed cut will lead to significant programmatic reductions and will impede research advances in diseases and injuries that impact the veterans.

The VA research program funds nearly 2,000 high-priority research projects expanding knowledge in areas critical to veterans' health care needs, most notably research in mental illness, aging, health services delivery improvement, cancer, and heart disease.

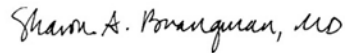
The discoveries of VA researchers continue to provide benefits to veterans and all Americans. Today, VA researchers are on the leading edge of research on Alzheimer's epidemiology and pathogenesis; genomics of diabetes; exercise strategies in the elderly; advances in prosthetic limbs and neuronal regeneration/reactivation; safety considerations and quality improvement for healthcare settings; pathogenesis, management and rehabilitation from stroke and TBI; end of life care models; osteoporosis and osteoarthritis diagnosis, management, and prevention; and use of electronic technology for telemedicine, telemonitoring, and tele-education.

The VA Office of Research and Development is committed to the highest quality and most innovative research. VA research has many unique opportunities to address some of the most critical issues in health care today. Its research focuses on the many different diseases and conditions that affect

veterans and is a vital force in improving veterans' health care and shaping the future of the VA health care system. We are concerned that without adequate appropriations, the VA will be unable to train a new generation of investigators to carry on this critically important work. The AGS supports maximal funding for the VA ORD in the FY2012 budget and that it is funded at no less than the \$581 million in funding that Congress provided in FY2010. Congress must ensure that we understand how best to care for our older veterans who fought for our country in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your consideration of this funding request. If you have comments or questions about VA funding or other issues related to well-being and healthy aging of older veterans, please have your staff contact Susie Sherman, Coordinator of Public Affairs & Advocacy, at 212-308-1414 or ssherman@americangeriatrics.org.

Sincerely,



Sharon A. Brangman, MD
President



Jennie Chin Hansen, RN, MS, FAAN
Chief Executive Officer