The American Physiological Society
Statement on FY 2015 Funding for the
Veterans Affairs Medical and Prosthetic Research

The American Physiological Society (APS) thanks the committee for its ongoing support of Medical and Prosthetic Research at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). VA medical research facilities across the country provide veterans access to state-of-the-art health care and conduct research that specifically addresses the medical needs of veterans. The APS urges you to make every effort to fund the VA Medical and Prosthetic Research Program at a level of $621 million in FY 2015.

Challenges for VA research and medical care

The VA health care system currently faces many challenges, including meeting the needs of new veterans from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many veterans suffer from service-related traumatic brain injuries, amputation, spinal cord injury, burns, mental illnesses such as post-traumatic stress disorder, cancers, Parkinson’s disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, diabetes, and polytrauma. The VA offers coordinated, state-of-the-art care supported by cutting edge research into the underlying pathophysiology and treatment of such conditions that face veterans.

The VA research program specifically addresses medical needs of veterans, but new technologies and treatments developed at VA medical centers lead to healthcare improvements for all Americans. VA scientists have done seminal research into rehabilitation following traumatic injury, development of state of the art prosthetic devices to recover functionality, and treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health issues including suicide. These medical problems are more prevalent among veterans but are also common in the general population. VA research also explores other conditions such as stroke, diabetes, pain and cancer and offers hope for the veteran and non-veteran alike. VA scientists are increasing research on issues specific to female veterans to better understand gender-specific health care needs, women’s experiences in service, and future health risks.
**Bringing innovation to health care**

Because most VA researchers are also clinicians caring for patients, the VA research system is ideally situated to foster the translation of basic biomedical research findings into clinically relevant diagnostics and treatment modalities. The VA has developed a number of programs that facilitate the translation of knowledge gained in the lab to use in a clinical setting. One example is the Million Veteran Program (MVP) which will collect genetic samples and general health information from one million veterans and track them over five years, creating a wealth of information that will inform research and efforts to improve health care.

Finally, in addition to focusing on research and patient care, VA medical researchers also play a critical role in educating the next generation of physician-scientists. Currently, more than half of all practicing physicians in the US receive some of their training at a VA facility.

**Investing in the future**

In recent years, Congress has increased funding for the VA Medical and Prosthetic Research Program, allowing clinicians and researchers to pursue new ideas that would otherwise go unexplored and expand research in promising areas of science. In order to build on this investment in the VA research enterprise, the APS joins our colleagues at the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology and the Friends of VA in urging you to appropriate $621 million for VA Research in FY 2015.

Funding VA research at $621 million would allow VA researchers to perform critical research addressing the health care needs of veterans from service in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as in Viet Nam, Korea and World War II and to take advantage of new and expanding scientific opportunities.

The APS is a professional society dedicated to fostering research and education as well as the dissemination of scientific knowledge concerning how the organs and systems of the body work. The Society was founded in 1887 and now has more than 10,000 member physiologists. Our members conduct research at colleges, universities, medical schools, and other public and private research institutions across the U.S., including VA facilities.