At a May 3 standing room-only session held by NAEVR at the ARVO Annual Meeting, representatives from DOD’s TATRC announced $10 million in grant awards to vision researchers from its Vision Research Program (VRP). The net total of these awards reflects the total of FY2009 and 2010 Congressional appropriations of $4 million and $3.75 million, respectively, from the Peer Reviewed Medical Research-Vision (PRMR-Vision) program line item in defense funding plus $3.2 million provided by TATRC’s “sister” agency within the U.S Army’s Medical Research and Materiel Command (MRMC), the Clinical and Rehabilitative Medicine Research Program (CRMRP), minus administrative costs.

In announcing the awards, TATRC Vision Portfolio Manager Robert Read exhibited a poster describing the grant awards, noting recipients, amounts, and applicability of the awards to the five critical areas identified in the June 2009 Program Announcement that called for submissions. Mr. Read commented that it was the quality of the proposals and their emphasis on research that fills “knowledge gaps” in understanding the impact of traumatic eye injury that have made Research Area Directors in other DOD programs, such as the CRMRP, interested in funding such projects. Mr. Read stated that, “there were initially more excellent proposals than there were dollars to spend—12 submissions scored between 1.1 and 1.8 on a scale of 1.0 to 5.0 with one being highest score] in the peer review process conducted by the American Institute of Biological Science (AIBS).”

Since TATRC has combined its FY2009 and 2010 funding, there will be no program announcement issued in calendar year 2010. In the interim, other DOD agencies are issuing Program Announcements that request grant submissions into visual and sensory research needs. Earlier this year, the Defense Medical Research and Development Program (DMRDP) requested grants under three mechanisms–Applied Research and Advanced Technology, Clinical Trials, and Basic Research—that solicited research into “Treatment of Sensory System Traumatic Injury (Vision, Hearing and Balance)” and “Diagnosis and Treatment of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)”. NAEVR understands that, shortly, a Program Announcement will issue for the FY2010 TBI program.

Visit the Defense-related Vision Research section of NAEVR’s Web site for more details.