Deployment-Related Vision Trauma Research

FY2011:

TATRC Plans Notification of Awards

The Department of Defense’s (DOD) Telemedicine and Advanced Technology Research Center (TATRC), which manages the Vision Trauma Research Program (VTRP) in defense appropriations, is finalizing peer and programmatic review of full proposals and plans to issue awards in late April 2012. Although the Congressional appropriation was $4 million, TATRC plans to support at least $8.7 million of awards in two categories—investigator-initiated awards at $1 million each and Hypothesis Development Awards at $250,000 each. The additional funding reflects that made available from other DOD programs, primarily Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), due to the past quality and responsiveness of vision research proposals. NAEVR’s James Jorkasky and David Epstein and ARVO’s Bobbie Austin, Ph.D. serve on TATRC’s Program Committee.

FY2012:

Congress funded the VTRP at $3.2 million, a 20 percent cut from the FY2011 appropriation. All Defense Health Programs were cut by 20 percent except for orthopedics, prostate cancer, and TBI. TATRC will likely add funds transferred from other DOD programs and release a FY2012 Program Announcement mid-year.

FY2013:

NAEVR has again requested $10 million in funding since the VTRP is military-relevant, addresses DOD-identified vision research gaps, and potentially results in rapid translation of research into battlefield diagnostic and therapeutic applications. For FY2013, NAEVR is ramping up its efforts to garner the “political will” of Congress for vision trauma research:

• On February 14, the Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) once again called for increased VTRP funding in the 26th annual edition of the Independent Budget, which is an annual set of recommendations to Congress regarding Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and DOD funding. The Independent Budget also calls on the VA to maintain the current bed capacity and full staffing levels in its Blind Rehabilitation Service (BRS) centers.

• On February 22, the Blinded Veterans Association (BVA), a NAEVR member, sent a letter to Congressional defense appropriators also requesting FY2013 VTRP funding at $10 million. BVA was joined by six signatories, including Paralyzed Veterans of America, Military Order of the Purple Heart USA, Inc., Veterans of Foreign Wars, Jewish War Veterans of the USA, National Association for Uniformed Services, and AMVETS.

• On February 27, U.S. Medicine, a monthly publication that serves healthcare professionals working in the VA, DOD, and U.S. Public Health Service, posted an article on the joint DOD/VA Vision Center of Excellence (VCE), especially its development of the Defense and Veterans Eye Injury and Vision Registry to track the occurrence, treatment, and outcomes of military eye-related injuries and vision impairment. The article also describes NAEVR advocacy for VTRP funding.

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

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Upcoming Events:

March 22:
AEVR Deployment-Related Vision Research Congressional Briefing and release of the Cost of Military Blindness Study being conducted by Kevin Frick, Ph.D. (Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health). 12 Noon, House Rayburn B-340

May 6-9: ARVO Annual Meeting
NAEVR Central will host TATRC representatives (appointment sign-up on site) in the Fort Lauderdale Convention Center

May 7: ARVO Annual Meeting
Defense Vision Briefing at the 7:30 am, Palm B, Fort Lauderdale Convention Center

NAEVR Meets with White House on Defense Vision Research Funding

On February 17, NAEVR was joined by BVA and the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) in meeting with White House staff engaged in outreach efforts to military families through the Wounded Warriors Project. Although the vision community primarily advocates with Congressional appropriators, it wants to ensure that the Obama administration is fully informed of the long-term implications from military eye injuries on veterans and their families.

Second right: Dennis O’Neil, who directs National Strategies and Plans for Military Veterans, Wounded Warriors and Military Families within the White House, was joined by (left to right) BVA’s Paul O’Rourke and Tom Zampieri, Ph.D., AAO’s Rebecca Hyder, and NAEVR’s James Jorkasky