Funding Opportunity Announcement:
VA Informatics and Data Science Pilot Grants

The North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System is pleased to announce a funding opportunity for pilot research applications in the areas of clinical informatics and data science. This opportunity is open to researchers affiliated with the **North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System** and/or the **University of Florida**. This initiative aims to support innovative projects that leverage the national VA Electronic Health Record system, Corporate Data Warehouse, and VA Informatics and Computing Infrastructure.

Why VA data?

The VA Electronic Health Record system is a comprehensive, national, population-based database, making it an invaluable resource for researchers seeking to investigate detailed health-related questions with large sample size and high statistical power. As a single payer health care system, the VA integrates both claims-based information (e.g. diagnostic and cost information) and clinical information (e.g., lab results). Since many VA patients receive the majority of their care within the VA system over many years, this database provides a rich source of longitudinal data to answer diverse questions. Additionally, VA data can be linked to Medicare claims data, which cumulatively can provide a nearly complete health record for many Veteran patients. Much of the VA Electronic Health Record data (as well as Medicare data) has been converted to the Observational Medical Outcomes Partnership (OMOP) Common Data Model (CDM). This conversion greatly facilitates data access and analysis for data scientists familiar with this format. A useful summary about VA data (addressing questions of "who, what, how, and where") is located [here](#).

Potential research topics may include (but are not limited to):

- Utilizing VA data to generate insights that can lead to improvements in healthcare delivery, health outcomes, healthcare costs, and/or operational efficiency.
- Developing new methodologies and technologies in data science to address critical challenges related to VA patient care access, quality, outcomes, equity, value and/or patient experience.
- Areas of particular priority for VA research include mental health, traumatic brain injury, pain and opioid use, suicide prevention, military exposures, and precision oncology.

Award Details:

Eligibility: Any faculty member of a UF Health Science Center College who is eligible to submit a proposal to an external funding agency can apply as Principal Investigator. Health Science Center Colleges include Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing, Pharmacy, Public Health and Health Professions, Veterinary Medicine, UF Genetics Institute, and Herbert Wertheim UF Scripps Institute for Biomedical Innovation and Technology. We encourage collaboration with College of Medicine faculty.

Award Amount: Up to $25,000 per project. Indirect costs are not permitted.

Award Source: Funding will come from the "VA Hospital" indirect cost account, which is managed by the UF College of Medicine Dean's Office but intended for VA-related research expenditures.

Project Duration: Funds must be spent within 12 months from the award date.

Number of Awards: Up to three awards will be granted based on the quality of applications. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis, and will undergo thorough reviews for scientific significance/rigor, as well as regulatory, financial, and logistical feasibility.

Pre-Award: The award will not be officially granted until the completion of IRB approval, VA Research and Development Committee approval, VA network access, and VA employment requirements. Applicants not currently affiliated with the VA must obtain "without compensation (WOC)" employee status to access VA data and networks.

Post-Award: Principal Investigators and other key team members will become part of the local VA Informatics and Data Science Working Group. This group meets monthly to share insights, discuss data access and management, discuss study progress, and plan future research goals.

Application Process and Selection Criteria:

Letter of Intent (LOI): Interested applicants should submit a brief LOI (1 page, 11 point font) outlining the pilot project's objectives and hypotheses, the study team members, their prior experience with VA and non-VA informatics and data science research, and how the pilot project may lead to a full-scale VA study. The project team is expected to include experts in data science and related fields, as well as a VA clinician collaborator with discipline-specific familiarity with the Electronic Health Record system.

Full Proposal: Selected applicants will be invited to submit a detailed 3-page proposal, including significance, innovation, methodology, expected outcomes, plans for a future full-scale study, and budget.

How to Apply

Applicants should submit their LOI and proposal by email to David Clark (davidclark@ufl.edu), Associate Chief of Staff for Research at North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System.

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Resources for VA Informatics and Data Science

The following resources are available to support investigators in conducted research with VA data.

VA Informatics

Informatics, also known as biomedical, clinical, or health care informatics, has been spurred by the rapid growth of health care technology. In its broadest sense, informatics improves human health, health care, and biomedical research by making health data accessible to researchers and clinicians and using that data to benefit patients. A broad overview of VA informatics initiatives and resources is located at https://www.research.va.gov/topics/informatics.cfm.

VA Information Resource Center (VIReC)

VIReC is a key resource for knowledge and guidance on VA data. VIReC aims to foster an informed analytic community capable of effectively using VA data to improve Veteran health and health care. They support data use by translating complex information about VA data into user friendly resources, centralizing information about VA data within a collaborative knowledge-sharing environment, and collaborating with the field to strengthen the capacity of data within VA's learning health system.

To learn more:

• VIReC public webpage
https://www.virec.research.va.gov/

• VIReC Cyberseminars
https://www.virec.research.va.gov/Resources/Cyberseminars.asp

VA Informatics and Computing Infrastructure (VINCI)

VINCI is an initiative designed to improve researchers' access to VA data and facilitate data analysis while safeguarding Veterans' privacy and ensuring data security. VINCI partners with the Corporate Data Warehouse (CDW) to host all data available through CDW as well as some unique datasets such as National Death Index (NDI) data.

To learn more:

• VINCI public webpage

https://www.research.va.gov/programs/vinci/default.cfm

• VINCI Central Intranet site (VA intranet only)

https://vincicentral.vinci.med.va.gov/SitePages/VINCI_University-VINCI_Data-Data_Sources.aspx

• VA Health Systems Research Cyberseminars:

https://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/cyberseminars/catalog-archive.cfm?SeriesSortParam=y&SeriesIDz=59

Centralized Interactive Phenomics Resource (CIPHER)

CIPHER is an online knowledge-sharing platform designed to optimize Electronic Health Record data for research and clinical operations. The CIPHER knowledgebase contains phenotype definitions, data mappings, programming code, and tools for visualization and phenotype generation.

To learn more:

• CIPHER public webpage

https://phenomics.va.ornl.gov/web/

• VA Health Systems Research Cyberseminar

Centralized Interactive Phenomics Resource (CIPHER): Overview and Demonstration of the VA Phenomics Library

Observational Medical Outcomes Partnership (OMOP) Common Data Model (CDM)

OMOP CDM is not specific to the VA; it is a standardized framework designed to enable comparison across various observational data sources. The goal of OMOP is to transform data into a common format with standardized data dictionaries, making analysis more straightforward. VA data in OMOP CDM do not introduce new information; instead, they pull information from various sources within the VA CDW using a standardized vocabulary. Because many non-VA databases also use the OMOP CDM, this facilitates the integration of datasets and enhances collaboration between VA and non-VA researchers familiar with OMOP.

To learn more:

• VA Health Systems Research Cyberseminar: The VA OMOP Common Data Model

https://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/for_researchers/cyber_seminars/archives/video_archive.cfm?SessionID=3632

• VA OMOP Academy (VA intranet Only)

https://sps.vinci.med.va.gov/prod/vincipedia/VINCIPedia/OMOP%20Academy.aspx

Includes resources for using VA OMOP data including training videos, common VA OMOP SQL examples, and a sandbox to practice SQL queries. The following screenshot shows some of the content of OMOP Academy.

OMOP Academy.pdf

Listserv for VA Health Systems Research and Development (HSRD)

VA employees (including without compensation (WOC) employes) with va.gov email address can subscribe to the national HSRD listserv. This listserv reaches a large community of VA data science experts who can provide guidance and answer questions pertaining to VA electronic health records and other related topics.

To subscribe, send an email to listserv@vaww.listserv.va.gov and leave the subject blank. In the body of the email, type: SUBSCRIBE HSRDATA-L