

# VA Quality Enhancement Research Initiative

## QUERI Mission

The mission of the Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) is to improve care by studying and facilitating the adoption of new treatments, tests, and models of care into routine clinical practice. QUERI is a central component of VA's commitment to improving the quality of Veterans' healthcare. QUERI focuses on diseases and conditions that are common among Veterans and that place a high burden on patients, family members, and the VA healthcare system (i.e., high prevalence and/or having a large impact on health and healthcare system).

## Collaborative Approach

In collaboration with VA's Central Office, Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) and facilities, each of the ten QUERI Centers conduct a diverse portfolio of implementation and research projects in their area of expertise. QUERI projects examine VA data to identify opportunities to improve care, develop or adapt effective interventions to improve quality of care, and test strategies to spread these multi-faceted quality improvement programs within VA.

In addition, QUERI Centers provide a core of topical research expertise which contributes to many other important VA activities. QUERI has been involved in:

- Improving data systems to track quality of care;
- Helping develop clinical practice guidelines and developing performance measures;
- Conducting literature reviews and syntheses;
- Contributing to other VISN- and facility-level plans for improving care;
- Serving on numerous national committees and workgroups; and
- Providing consultations on national, VISN, and facility-level activities in their specific areas.

## The QUERI Process

QUERI utilizes a six-step process to diagnose gaps in performance and identify and implement interventions to address them.

1. Identify priority conditions and opportunities for improving the health of Veterans.
2. Identify effective practices for improving outcomes for priority conditions.
3. Examine variations in existing practices, the sources of variation, and their relation to health outcomes.
4. Identify and test interventions to improve the delivery of best practices.
5. Evaluate the feasibility, adoption, and impact of coordinated improvement programs to spread best practices.
6. Evaluate the effects of improvement programs on Veterans' health outcomes, including quality of life.

## QUERI Opportunities and Information

QUERI project opportunities are available for VA researchers, clinicians, and managers through a broad range of funding mechanisms, programs, and ongoing collaborative projects. QUERI supports several types of research, including short, rapid-response studies, as well as larger studies to test implementation strategies.

The QUERI program is directed by David Atkins, M.D., M.P.H.

### How Do I Learn More?

For more information visit the QUERI website at [www.queri.research.va.gov](http://www.queri.research.va.gov) or contact

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**QUERI**  
**Quality Enhancement Research Initiative**

*Using Research Evidence to Improve Practice*

## QUERI Coordinating Centers and Ongoing Work

Below are examples of QUERI efforts and impacts aimed at improving the health and quality of life of Veterans.

- **Chronic Heart Failure (CHF)-QUERI** focuses on reducing admission and readmissions, increasing the use of life-prolonging treatments and the use of therapy to improve quality of life, promoting self-management by patients, and the identification of Veterans with unrecognized heart failure (HF). CHF-QUERI is conducting several projects that include the Heart Failure Provider Network, with more than 860 providers from 150 facilities, and the VA Hospital-To-Home (H2H) initiative to reduce unnecessary hospital readmissions, and improve the appropriate use of beta-blockers in patients with CHF. A comprehensive Heart Failure Provider Toolkit also has been developed to help providers better manage heart failure patients.
- **Diabetes-QUERI** works with Operations partners to: 1) reduce diabetes risk factors, which include developing and implementing evidence-based approaches to support self-management for diet, exercise, and weight loss; and 2) improve treatment and reduce complications of diabetes by implementing innovative self-management programs; and 3) developing and implementing individualized assessments to enhance diabetes treatment and decrease inappropriate care.
- **eHealth-QUERI** works with VA program offices to implement into practice and evaluate e-Health as a model of care for augmenting the delivery of evidence-based healthcare services to Veterans and their families. eHealth-QUERI focuses on assessing the implementation of MyHealthVet applications, including the Blue Button feature in the personal health record and secure messaging. eHealth-QUERI will provide rigorous evaluations of the impact of these applications on healthcare processes, utilization, satisfaction, and health outcomes for Veterans.
- **HIV/Hepatitis-QUERI** works to improve the identification and care of Veterans infected with the Human Immunodeficiency (HIV) and Hepatitis C (HCV) viruses. The mission is accomplished by focusing on three main goals: 1) increasing detection of previously undiagnosed infection, 2) improving chronic disease management, and 3) improving access and equity in care of these conditions.
- **Ischemic Heart Disease-QUERI** collaborates with VA's Office of Patient Care Services, Office of Specialty Care Transformation, and the Office of Informatics and Analysis to implement programs to improve quality of cardiac care and outcomes for Veterans. Ongoing projects include: identifying predictors and outcomes for in-hospital acute myocardial infarction; improving risk management for IHD; improving medication adherence; and tracking the appropriate use and safety of invasive procedures via the Clinical Assessment, Reporting and Tracking System for Cardiac Catheterization Laboratories (CART-CL). The FDA has designated CART-CL as a sentinel system for monitoring cath lab device safety.
- **Mental Health-QUERI** is partnering with clinical leaders and other stakeholders to improve treatment and outcomes for Veterans with mental health conditions. Specifically, MH-QUERI researchers are developing and testing strategies to: improve general medical treatment and outcomes for Veterans with mental health conditions; improve treatment of mental health conditions in primary care; implement recovery-based services, including programs for homelessness, family psycho-education, peer-support, and supported employment; implement evidence-based practices for PTSD; enhance suicide prevention efforts; and increase access to evidence-based psychotherapies.
- **Polytrauma and Blast-Related Injuries-QUERI** promotes the successful rehabilitation, psychological adjustment, and community reintegration of Veterans who have experienced polytrauma and blast-related injuries. Blast injuries are the result of an explosion and affect multiple body systems and/or organs. A priority of this QUERI is to improve the screening for and evaluation of high-frequency "invisible" problems, such as traumatic brain injury with co-occurring hearing loss, vision loss, pain, and mental health problems that include post-traumatic stress disorder. In addition, investigators conduct research to promote the identification and evaluation of best practices for polytrauma rehabilitation, as well as research that will help optimize the ability of caregivers/family members to provide support to Veterans with polytrauma and blast-related injuries.
- **Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)-QUERI** strives to implement evidence-based methods for enhancing patient self-management and disease prevention for Veterans with SCI in the context of interdisciplinary care. SCI-QUERI works closely with VA Operations to identify the critical, time-sensitive issues that can be addressed as part of this broader mission. Currently, SCI-QUERI is working to: improve

pressure ulcer management; increase the use of guidelines for infection control including MRSA; increase influenza vaccination rates in SCI health care workers; understand current practices regarding weight management for Veterans with SCI/D; and increase the use of new models of care delivery, including telehealth and VA's personal health record system – My HealthVet -- among Veterans with SCI/D.

- **Stroke-QUERI** works to reduce the risk of stroke and to foster system, provider, and patient processes that result in the best possible outcomes for Veterans with a history of stroke. This mission is accomplished by focusing on three core clinical areas: 1) stroke risk factor management, 2) in-hospital management, and 3) collecting and reporting data to support stroke policy decisions. To address these clinical goals, Stroke-QUERI employs cross-cutting methodological approaches, including: healthcare system redesign, information technology interventions, and self-management strategies.
- **Substance Use Disorder (SUD)-QUERI** works to promote problem recognition and recovery among VA patients with tobacco, alcohol and drug use disorders, and to increase the implementation of effective SUD treatment. SUD-QUERI priorities include: improving the accessibility, quality, and efficiency of SUD specialty treatment; improving the accessibility, quality, and efficiency of treatment of hazardous substance use within VA medical settings; and improving the integrated and/or co-located treatment of SUD and common comorbidities, including infectious diseases, PTSD, and pain.

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**VA's Center for Implementation Practice and Research Support (CIPRS)** works to facilitate accelerated improvement in the quality and performance of the VA healthcare system through enhanced implementation practice and research. CIPRS programs include education, technical assistance and consultation to VA implementation practitioners and researchers, as well as the development of implementation theory and methods.