



Quality Enhancement Research Initiative

Using Research Evidence to Improve Practice



Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Office of Research & Development
Health Services Research & Development Service

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 cost and resource utilization).

Collaborative Approach

In collaboration with VA's Central Office, Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) and facilities, the nine QUERI Centers (one for each condition) conduct a diverse portfolio of research and implementation projects. 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.

In addition, QUERI Centers provide a core of topical research expertise which helps support many other important VA activities. These include:

- Developing and strengthening data systems to track quality of care;
- Developing guidelines and 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.

QUERI Coordinating Centers and Ongoing Work

Below are some 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 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 500 participating providers, and the VA Hospital-To-Home (H2H) initiative to reduce unnecessary hospital readmissions. Investigators also are working to improve the appropriate use of beta-blockers in patients with CHF and to improve collaborations in care between CHF specialists and primary care providers.
- **Diabetes Mellitus QUERI** works to reduce preventable morbidity and mortality among Veterans with diabetes. Specific priority areas include: optimizing the management of cardiovascular risk factors; decreasing rates of diabetes-related complications (i.e., visual loss, amputation, and kidney disease); improving patient self-management; enhancing the management of diabetes patients with comorbid conditions; and advancing quality/performance measures.
- **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 Quality and Performance, Office of Health Information, and Office of Information & Technology, to implement programs to improve quality of cardiac care for Veterans. Ongoing projects include: identifying predictors and outcomes for in-hospital acute myocardial infarction, improving risk management for IHD, and tracking the use of invasive procedures, via the nationally mandated 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 stakeholders to improve treatment and outcomes for Veterans with depression or other mental illnesses. Specifically, MH-QUERI researchers are developing and testing strategies to: implement evidence-based depression care models in primary care; implement a chronic care model for schizophrenia in mental health specialty care; improve antipsychotic medication management; enhance suicide prevention efforts; increase access to evidence-based psychotherapies; and implement recovery-based services, including family psycho-education, peer-support, and supported employment.
- **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 SCI patients 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, establish a weight management program for overweight or obese Veterans with SCI, and to increase the use of guidelines for preventing infection with methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) among Veterans with SCI. Investigators also are working to increase the use of telehealth and VA's personal health record system – My HealtheVet -- among Veterans with SCI.
- **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) stroke rehabilitation and recovery. 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 Disorders (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. The SUD-QUERI priorities include screening and follow-up for alcohol misuse in primary care; evidence-based psychosocial and pharmacotherapy interventions in specialty care for SUD; increasing tobacco use cessation services across settings; and improving care of Veterans with SUD and comorbid psychiatric disorders (i.e., depression and PTSD) or infectious diseases (i.e., HIV and hepatitis C).



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.

The QUERI program is directed by David Atkins, MD, MPH.

How Do I Learn More?

For more information visit the QUERI website at www.queri.research.va.gov or contact

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