**Advances in VA Research Under Dr. Joel Kupersmith’s Leadership 2005-2013**

**Plaque from Secretary Eric Shinseki to Dr. Kupersmith on leaving the VA**

In grateful appreciation of the service to the US Department of Veterans affairs. Your expertise in developing new and innovative approaches has changed the way research is performed and served to hasten the translation of evidence-based findings into everyday health care. Your vision in creating the Million Veteran Program has established one of the world's largest genetic databases and paved the way for new ways of treating patients. Your commitment to strengthening ties with the federal government partners, Veteran Service Organizations and academic affiliates has become an enduring contribution to VA's mission. Your leadership in building research capacity nationwide has brought a research program to new levels of excellence and your service truly has improved the lives of veterans and their families.

**Handwritten:** Many, Many thanks for your dedication and leadership.

**Accomplishments**

**Million Veteran Program:** Initiated and developed the Million Veteran Program, now the world’s largest healthcare system genomic database. It continues to be a most important resource and was, at its inception, a central part of the President Obama’s Precision Medicine Initiative.

**New Methods for Healthcare Research:** Developed new methods of conducting healthcare systems research, such as the CREATE and COIN programs, which mandate involvement of health system leadership in developing health services research so that the research will ultimately be implemented

**Presidential Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award**: Won the Presidential Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award for the Pharmacy Coordinating Center of the Cooperative Studies Program, only the second government entity to accomplish this. The award recognized the finest American organizations, in health care and other areas, for performance excellence.

**HBCU Young Investigator Award:** Worked with Historically Black Colleges and Universities, ORD established a new VA-funded young investigator award **f**or 2 investigators

**VA/DoD Collaboration:** As announced in a Presidential address on August 9. 2013, an unprecedented alignment was forged between VA and DoD research programs in the areas of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), including first-time-ever joint studies by the two Departments. This initiative has had many accomplishments

**Central Institutional Review Board:** Initiated a unified VA Central Institutional Review Board, which reviews research over the entire system, to facilitate and enhance the quality and efficiency of human research protection in research programs conducted at more than one VA site. It has been emulated by others and was important to the Million Veteran Program.

**IT Platforms:** Adopted new advanced IT platforms for ORD science and administration and converting from paperwork - for example, to facilitate grant applications.

**Comparative Effectiveness Research:** Established VA’s leadership role in Comparative Effectiveness Research, allowing for comparisons of multiple medications or treatments to determine which are most effective for veterans.

**Transforming Administration of VA Research:** Transformed the administration of VA Research through improvements such as simplifying regulations; enabling researchers to submit grant proposals online; and working with other VA entities, such as Human Resources and Contracting, to form specialized support units to meet the unique needs of the research program.

**IT Security:** Convened a university/government group to set standards for IT security and privacy which resulted in an important guidance monograph entitled *Working Group on Information Technology Security and Privacy in VA and NIH Sponsored Research*

**Landmark Research:** Pursued pioneering, landmark research of special benefit to veterans and their families, including work on the interface between the human brain and computers, one outcome of which is the ability to move a prosthesis, such as a human hand, with one’s thoughts. Other areas in which high value studies have been conducted include mental health, cancer, heart disease, prosthetics, regeneration and health systems

**Laboratory Infrastructure Improvement**: Initiated a major laboratory infrastructure improvement, for the first time with a portion of VA infrastructure finding allocated to research. For one, this enlarged VA research capacity.

**Achieving ISO 9001 Certification:** Achieved ISO 9001 Certification for VA’s Cooperative Studies Program, first in the VA and demonstrating that the research program was an example of good quality management practices.

**Collaboration:** Through personal advocacy along with the Communications Section ORD created new levels of collaboration with VA stakeholders, including VSOs, academic affiliates, and other branches of government.

**Survey of Researchers:** A survey of field VA researchers by outside group (Abt) comparing 2011 with that of 2000 showed substantially greater job satisfaction in the overall research environment, including for example VA’s proposal review process, protected time for research, levels of autonomy in research, opportunities for collaboration and for creativity. The survey also showed that a much-diminished proportion of VA researchers were looking for a new position outside of VA (23 to 11%).