

2025 Early Career Investigator Contest

Proudly Sponsored by the Veterans Health Foundation in Support and Celebration of National VA Research Week



The Veterans Health Foundation's (VHF) Board of Directors and Dr. Walid Gellad, Associate Chief of Staff for Research and Development, invite the submission of abstracts for poster or oral presentations from early career investigators, clinical research and post-doctoral fellows, medical residents, and graduate students engaged in research at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (VAPHS).

The goal of this contest is to showcase the efforts of early clinical and basic science researchers through poster and oral presentations as part of VA Pittsburgh's 2025 in person celebration of National VA Research Week.

TIMELINE

Deadline to submit electronic abstracts	March 28, 2025
Preliminary Review and determination of oral presentations	April 1-15, 2025
Notification of oral presentation determinations	April 15, 2025
Deadline to submit a PDF file of poster	April 28, 2025
Deadline to submit poster for printing, if utilizing VAPHS Public Affairs Office	April 21, 2025
Deadline for applicant to deliver printed poster to VAPHS Research Office	May 5, 2025
Presentations & Awards	May 12, 2025

ELIGIBILITY

Applicants must have a current VAPHS appointment (paid employee or WOC), have not received a VA Merit Award, and meet one of the following:

- Any student or graduate student who is currently enrolled at an institution with an academic affiliation with VAPHS, and who is engaged in research at VAPHS.
- Any medical resident or fellow (clinical research, post-doctoral, or VA Advanced fellows) who is engaged in research at VAPHS
- Any Investigator/Researcher who is engaged in research at VAPHS and who has completed a degree granting program, residency or fellowship within the past 3 years.

RESEARCH

- Must focus on/address an issue relevant to Veterans' health and must either be approved by the VAPHS Research & Development (R&D) Committee or associated with a VAPHS Principal Investigator.

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION & CONTEST

- All applicants must use the **Abstract Submission Form** (emailed with this notification) to submit an electronic abstract of their research and a statement of how the research is relevant to Veterans' health via email to VHAPTHResearchOffice@va.gov before **March 28, 2025**.
- Abstracts and posters used for the University Of Pittsburgh Department Of Medicine's Research Day, and/or that have been or will be submitted to a regional or national meeting are **fully eligible**.
- Multiple abstracts from one laboratory/research group are allowed; however, researchers from a single laboratory/group cannot submit identical abstracts. Only one entry per person will be accepted.
- Past winners may submit an abstract but are ineligible for an award.
- All abstract submissions will be accepted for poster presentation, and at least two abstracts will be selected for oral presentations.
- Oral and poster presentations will be held at VA Pittsburgh's University Drive Campus the morning of Monday, May 12, 2025, before the VAPHS Research Week Kickoff Event.

AWARDS

The VHF will award winners with funding which may be used for education, travel, supplies, publications, memberships, etc. in accordance with the VHF's policies.

- Up to 2 oral presenters will be awarded with a monetary sum
- Up to 2 poster presenters will be awarded with a monetary sum
- Awards will be presented in the Atrium at VA Pittsburgh's University Drive Campus on May 12, 2025 immediately following all presentations.

REVIEW CRITERIA

- All abstracts and Veterans' health relevance statements will undergo a panel review and will be discussed during VAPHS Research & Development Committee meeting on **April 15, 2025** to determine oral presentations.
 - Oral presenters will be notified of this determination no later than April 16, 2025.
- Abstracts selected for mini verbal poster presentations will undergo review based on the poster PDF and its ability to communicate the relevance and importance of the scientific findings and the significance to veterans' health.

PRESENTATIONS

- Oral and poster presentations will be held at VA Pittsburgh's University Drive Campus the morning of Monday, May 12, 2025. Oral presentations will take place immediately following poster presentations. Additional details, including specific times and locations for presentations, will be conveyed to all entrants no later than April 16, 2025.
- **POSTER PRESENTATIONS**
 - Poster presentations will include a 3-5 minute verbal presentation followed by questions from the review panel.
 - Applicants must be able to present poster to be eligible for awards.
- **ORAL PRESENTATIONS**

- Oral presentations will be 10-15 minutes followed by a 10 minute question session.
- Presenters will have access to a computer, projector and microphone. Presenters may choose to bring their personal laptop. If using the VA computer, please note that use of external storage systems (such as USB drives) is prohibited.
- If your abstract is selected for an oral presentation, you will be contacted by the VAPHS Research Office with additional information no later than April 16, 2025.
- Abstracts selected for oral presentations will not be required to formally present at the displayed poster, however it is encouraged that oral presenters stand by their posters to be available for any questions.

POSTER GUIDELINES

- A full size printed display. No larger than 36 inches high by 48 inches wide if printing a new poster, or no larger than 36 inches high by 62 inches wide if reusing a pre-printed poster.
- We are finalizing a new process for printing posters. We will share that information as soon as possible. But if you need VAPHS to print your poster, plan to have the native file sent to Claire.Raible@va.gov no later than April 21, 2025. It should be set up to be no larger than 36 inches high by 48 inches wide. Any posters submitted after April 21 will not be printed.
 - Applicants are encouraged to have their mentor provide a final review of the poster prior to submitting it for printing as no re-prints will be made.
 - If you would like the VAPHS Public Affairs Office to print your poster, you must provide Claire.Raible@va.gov an electronic copy no later than **April 21, 2025**.
- **Regardless of the printing method, a PDF file is required for all posters by April 28, 2025.** Poster PDFs should be emailed to Claire.Raible@va.gov. PDFs of the posters will be made available for the judges prior to the poster viewing sessions.
- Printed posters must be delivered to the Research Office Building by Monday, May 5, 2025. Posters will be set up and taken down by the Research Office for presentations.
- Investigators must retrieve their posters from the Research Office by Friday, May 16, 2025.

Please contact the VAPHS Research Office at VHAPTHResearchOffice@va.gov with any questions!