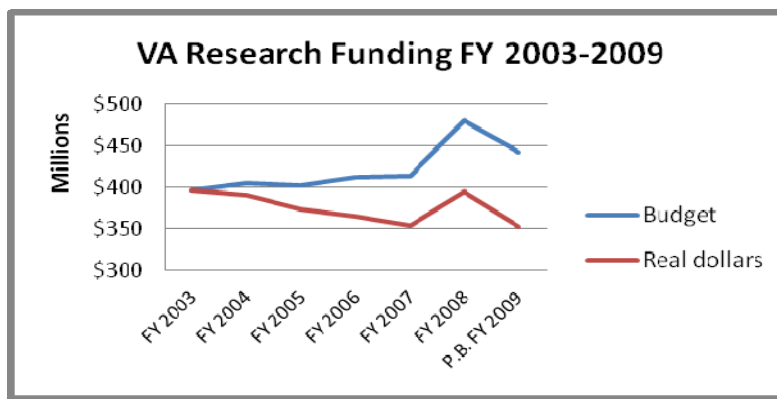


ASN Urges Increased Funding for Research Benefiting Our Nation’s Veterans

The American Society of Nephrology (ASN) urges Congress to **increase support for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical and Prosthetic Research Program to \$555 million in fiscal year (FY) 2009**. President George W. Bush has proposed funding the program at \$442 million, a \$38 million, or 7.9%, decrease from FY 2008. The significant decrease will stunt programs initiated to improve the care of returning soldiers while also limiting available funding for research in chronic diseases—including chronic kidney disease, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease—that affect the majority of veteran patients seeking treatment from VA. The recommended increase will allow VA to keep pace with inflation, increase the award cap for VA investigators, and increase programmatic support for research impacting returning soldiers.

According to the President’s budget proposal, VA will decrease funding for research in diabetes and major complications (a 21.5% decrease) even as the department recognizes that “nearly a quarter of the veterans receiving care from VA have diabetes, and an even greater number (73%) are at risk due to overweight or obesity.” VA will also cut funding for research in central nervous system injury by 20%; acute and traumatic injury, military occupations and environmental exposure, and substance abuse by 18%; and mental illness by 15%. The cuts contradict congressional requests for additional research in areas of “mental health—especially the causes, prevention, mitigation, and treatment of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)... the full spectrum of traumatic brain injury; [and] substance abuse.”



* BRDPI used for inflation calculations

In light of the significant number of patients inflicted with diabetes, the veteran population is at particular risk for succumbing to chronic kidney disease. While ASN appreciates the priority VA has placed on kidney disease research—as evidenced by the increase in funding to more than \$15 million—the **society urges VA to allocate funds that appropriately reflect the impact kidney disease has on the veterans it serves.**

ASN also recommends an additional \$45 million in appropriated funds to renovate existing VA research facilities. State-of-the-art research requires state-of-the-art technology, equipment, and facilities. Yet, VA facilities have run out of adequate research space. Ventilation, electrical supply, and plumbing appear frequently on lists of needed upgrades along with space reconfiguration.

The VA Medical and Prosthetic Research program is one of the nation’s premier research endeavors and attracts high-caliber clinicians to deliver care and conduct research in VA health care facilities. It is a completely intramural program—investigators must have at least a 5/8 VA appointment to be eligible for VA funds—making it an effective recruitment and retention mechanism for physicians interested in combining their clinical duties with medical investigation.

ASN is a not-for-profit organization of 11,000 physicians and scientists dedicated to the study of nephrology and committed to providing a forum for the promulgation of information regarding the latest research and clinical findings on kidney diseases. ASN is a member of the executive committee of the Friends of VA Medical Care and Health Research (FOVA). FOVA is a diverse coalition of more than 90 national academic, medical, and scientific societies; voluntary health and patient advocacy groups; and veteran-focused associations that advocates for appropriate funding for the health programs that serve the nation’s veterans