

[Learn more](#) about the Veteran Engagement in Research Group (VERG) initiative.

Questions? Comments? Suggestions? Please email Hannah Bailey ([Hannah.Bailey2@va.gov](mailto:Hannah.Bailey2@va.gov))

For general questions about VERG, contact co-leads Justeen Hyde ([Justeen.Hyde@va.gov](mailto:Justeen.Hyde@va.gov)) or Anna Barker ([Anna.Barker@va.gov](mailto:Anna.Barker@va.gov))

## Veteran Consultant Spotlight: Colleen Turner, PhD, Lt Col, USAFR

Colleen Turner, PhD, Lt Col, USAFR, is a Vietnam-era Veteran with U.S. Air Force active duty, reserve, and national guard service spanning 30 years. She achieved the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the Air Force Reserve and earned an MSW and PhD in Social Welfare from UCLA. Prior to her military service, Dr. Turner acted as a family advocate for her brother, a U.S. Marine Corps Veteran. Both her own military background and service as a family advocate for her brother's VA care informed her experiences and contributions as a Veteran Consultant for the Behavioral Health Interdisciplinary Program (BHIP), an ongoing CHOIR project.

Dr. Turner first became involved with BHIP after seeking and receiving mental health care for a PTSD diagnosis. This experience was fraught with obstacles and difficulty, and she felt a sense of alarm for those more vulnerable than she. The Mental Health Director at the VA where Dr. Turner was accessing care suggested she develop a document that detailed the difficulties she experienced in receiving this care. This effort culminated in an 11-page document called *One Veteran's PTSD Journey*, which highlights issues in the process of accessing care and suggests better practices. Dr. Turner eventually presented this document at the national BHIP group, led by Dr. Mark Bauer. Dr. Bauer then asked her to become a formal and financially compensated member of the BHIP group, which she did over five years. This work evolved into continued participation with the Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) and subsequent BHIP projects.

A highlight of working on BHIP was getting to know the researchers she worked with. Dr. Turner was impressed by the earnestness of the care the team showed for the Veterans they were studying. She gave her input throughout the project, especially highlighting areas where aspects of the project could be adapted to be more relevant to or accepted by Veterans. This input was welcomed by the BHIP team. In working with this group, Dr. Turner realized that there were aspects of the Veteran experience she took for granted that the research team hadn't considered. It made her appreciate the value of having someone on board who could provide a Veteran patient's perspective to help the research be more effective.

## Grants Funded

Between December 2022 and June 2023, 17 grants were submitted for HS&R funding, 12 grants involved Veterans via pre-funding consult, and 11 proposed to include Veteran consultants in the post funding stage.

### December 2022 Funded Grants with Veteran Involvement

Project	PI
Surveillance of Modifiable Social Determinants of Health for Prioritizing Wraparound Supports	Hong Yu
Accounting for social determinants of health to improve access to gender affirming treatment in transgender Veterans	Guneet Jasuja
Veteran-Centered Transformation of Pulmonary Hypertension Organization into a Regional Model of Care in VA (TRANSPHORM-VA)	Kari Gillmeyer
Improving Quality of End-of-Life Care for Veterans Receiving Hospice in Community Nursing Homes	Melissa Wachterman
Co-Design and Pilot testing of Peer-led Community Outreach to Improve Equity, Veteran-Centeredness and Uptake of Lung Cancer Screening	Renda Wiener

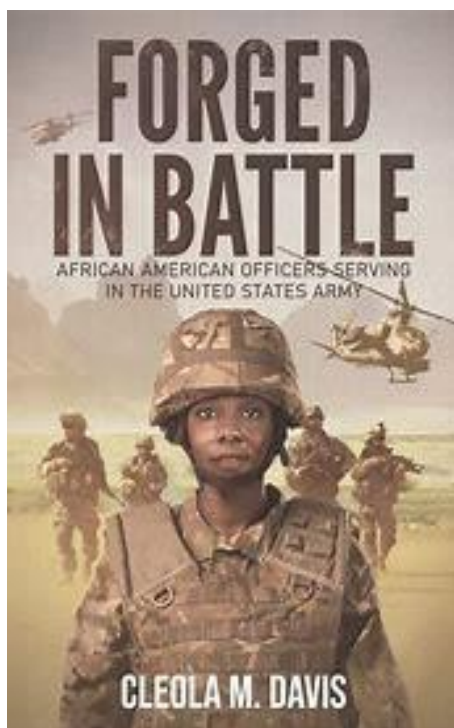
### June 2023 Funded Grants with Veteran Involvement

Project	PI
Applying high-reliability organization principles to home care to enhance Veteran safety	Emma Quach
Increasing Use of Video Telehealth among Veterans Experiencing Homelessness and Substance Use Disorder	Lynn Garvin
Building a Shared Decision Making Implementation Strategy for the Emerging Paradigm of Precision Cancer Screening	Marla Clayman

# Stakeholder Council Meeting Update:

The Stakeholder Council provides valuable feedback to help inform CHOIR's strategic priorities, map new directions for CHOIR research, and ensure work is relevant to the Veteran communities we serve. See full meeting highlights for more details ([LINK](#)).

- CHOIR leadership presented on the new impact goals that will be featured in our center grant submission renewal. This includes: 1) Implementing Veteran-Centered Communication for Precision Oncology, 2) Virtual Care, and 3) Whole Health Care for Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Veterans. The Stakeholder Council provided helpful feedback for each of the impact goals. Highlights include:
- Precision Oncology: Council members shared that the use of AI may be perceived differently for each Veteran, with age being an important consideration. Cultural competency is important for providers when explaining test results that AI generates. Above all, it is important to keep individual Veteran preferences in mind when making care decisions.
- Virtual Care: Members discussed the pros and cons of telehealth for medical appointments and other health-related services. Given variability to preferences for how care is provided, it is important to understand Veterans' preferences and invest in building capacity to engage in telehealth appointments as needed.
- Whole Health Care: Council members provided input on the language used for this impact goal, recommending the use of "health equity" instead of "economic or social disadvantaged." They also noted the importance of building providers' understanding of military knowledge and the capacity to ask the right questions so they can gain trust and develop a therapeutic relationship.



## VCN Book Club

February 28th, 2024

The VCN held a book discussion with Lieutenant Colonel Cleola M. Davis on February 28th to discuss her memoir, *Forged in Battle: African American Officers Serving in the United States Army*. Follow [THIS](#) link to watch the book's trailer.

During the discussion, Lt. Col. Davis spoke of her experiences and how they inspired her to write the book. A recording of this discussion can be found in the Teams chat from this meeting.

For information on the VCN Book Club, contact Jessica Riley ([Jessica.Riley@va.gov](mailto:Jessica.Riley@va.gov)).

## Subcommittee Updates

**Stakeholder Council:** The Stakeholder Council last met on December 13, 2023 and plan to meet again in May 2024. Contact Katelyn Marchany ([Katelyn.Marchany@va.gov](mailto:Katelyn.Marchany@va.gov)) for additional information or to get involved.

**Evaluation Subcommittee:** The evaluation committee has finished the analysis of the Veterans involved in grants and research. Please contact Eileen Dryden ([Eileen.Dryden@va.gov](mailto:Eileen.Dryden@va.gov)) for additional information or to get involved.

**IRB Guidance Subcommittee:** The IRB Guidance subcommittee is a newly formed subgroup based out of the Evaluation Committee. They are currently working on creating guidance documents to help VA Boston and VA Bedford research teams navigate how to add Veterans to their protocols as a research participant, a consultant, or as part of a co-design team member. If you are interested in joining the IRB Guidance committee or have questions, please contact Eileen Dryden ([Eileen.Dryden@va.gov](mailto:Eileen.Dryden@va.gov)).

**Best Practices Subcommittee:** The Best Practices Subcommittee is hosting a panel of Veterans from our consultant network to join CHOIR research conference on Wednesday, 3/27, to share their experiences working as members of a research team. Contact Alexandra Howard ([Alexandra.Howard@va.gov](mailto:Alexandra.Howard@va.gov)) for more information.

**Veteran Consultant Network (VCN):** The VCN is currently working towards recruiting more Veteran Consultants. For any questions, or if you are interested in joining the VCN Subcommittee or the VCN itself, contact Mike Still ([Michael.Still@va.gov](mailto:Michael.Still@va.gov)), Katie Codair ([Kathleen.Codair@va.gov](mailto:Kathleen.Codair@va.gov)), and Shawn Dunlap ([Shawn.Dunlap@va.gov](mailto:Shawn.Dunlap@va.gov)).