

INCLUSION OF WOMEN AND MINORITIES IN RESEARCH HANDBOOK

1. **REASON FOR ISSUE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Handbook prescribes policies regarding the inclusion of women and minorities in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) sponsored research.
2. **SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES:** This constitutes a complete rewrite of the superseded document.
3. **RELATED DIRECTIVE:** VHA Directive 1200 to be issued.
4. **RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Office of Research and Development (12) is responsible for the contents of this VHA Handbook.
5. **RESCISSION:** This VHA Handbook rescinds M-3, Part I, Chapter 14, dated July 24, 1992.
6. **RECERTIFICATION:** This document is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working date of May 2006.

Thomas L. Garthwaite, M.D.
Under Secretary for Health

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INCLUSION OF WOMEN AND MINORITIES IN RESEARCH

1. PURPOSE

This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Handbook provides information regarding the requirement for the inclusion of women and minorities in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) sponsored research. *NOTE: This requirement extends to all research proposals reviewed and funded by the Office of Research and Development (ORD), including Medical Research Service (MRS), Rehabilitation Research and Development Service (RR&D), Health Services Research and Development Service (HSR&D), and the Cooperative Studies Program (CSP).*

2. SCOPE

a. The primary goal of the VA research program is to conduct research that addresses the high priority health care needs of veterans. For this reason, the subject population of VA research should reflect the demographics of the veteran population. The demographic profile of veterans is unlike the United States (U.S.) population as a whole. In particular, women constitute a small portion of all veterans, and most racial/ethnic minorities are disproportionately represented. Nevertheless, VA recognizes the importance of extending the benefits of research to all individuals, regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity.

b. Considering the constraints of the VA patient population, applicants for VHA research support are expected to include women and minorities in their study populations. Special efforts shall be made to include women and members of minority groups in studies of diseases, disorders, and conditions that disproportionately affect them. This policy applies to all research activities involving human subjects or human specimens and/or tissues conducted completely or partially in VA facilities or in approved off-site locations.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. **VHA Headquarters.** Scientific peer review groups convened through the ORD, VHA Headquarters, will evaluate all research proposals involving human subjects or human specimens and/or tissues for compliance with this policy.

b. **VISN Directors.** Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Directors will ensure that each medical center under their respective jurisdiction is in compliance with policy and procedural guidelines relating to the inclusion of women and minorities in research.

c. **Facility Directors**

(1) The Director or Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of each medical center is responsible for the research and development (R&D) program of that institution, advised and assisted by an R&D Committee. Directors will ensure that the local R&D committee and human studies subcommittee (i.e., Institutional Review Board) review all research proposals for compliance with this policy.

(2) Directors will ensure, through their research offices, that all applicants and potential applicants for research support are familiar with and comply with the requirements of this Handbook. All research proposals involving human subjects or human specimens and/or tissues should include an acknowledgement of VA policy to include women and minorities in research.

(3) Directors will ensure, through their research offices, that progress reports of VA funded research reflect the demographics of the actual study population.

4. DEFINITION

Racial/Ethnic Minority: This category applies to any subset of the U.S. population that is distinguished by racial, ethnic, and/or cultural heritage. VA research adopts the classifications defined by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), which include the following categories for data on race: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White. The OMB categories for data on ethnicity are: Hispanic or Lantino and Not Hispanic or Latino. These categories are intended to be inclusive, rather than exclusive.