

October 12, 1993

1. Transmitted is a revised Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration Manual M-2, "Clinical Affairs," Part I, "General," Chapter 11, "Distinguished Physician (DP) Program." Because the revision is extensive, brackets were not used to identify changes in text.

2. Principal changes are:

a. Paragraph 11.01: Establishes the scope of the chapter.

b. Paragraph 11.02: Sets forth Veterans Health Administration policy on utilization of Distinguished Physicians.

c. Paragraph 11.03: Indicates operational responsibility for the Distinguished Physician Program resides with the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary for Health, and that Distinguished Physicians report through the facility Director at their location to the Deputy Under Secretary for Health.

d. Paragraphs 11.04, 11.05, and 11.06: Discuss the submission to VA Central Office of Distinguished Physician nominees, the selection criteria, and requests to extend Distinguished Physician appointments.

e. Paragraph 11.07: Covers the appointment and pay of Distinguished Physicians.

f. Paragraph 11.08: Clarifies the functions of Distinguished Physicians.

g. Paragraph 11.09: Outlines Distinguished Physician activity schedules and reports.

h. Paragraph 11.10: Provides information about funding and support for Distinguished Physicians and adds new information on the receipt of remuneration from other than Department of Veterans Affairs sources.

i. Paragraph 11.11: Provides information related to the research privileges and obligations of Distinguished Physicians.

j. Paragraph 11.12: Contains applicable legal and regulatory references.

3. Filing instructions

Remove pages	Insert pages
11-i	11-i through 11-ii
11-1 through 11-2	11-1 through 11-5

4. RESCISSION: M-2, Part I, Chapter 11, change 64, dated January 6, 1981, and Contents Page 11-i, dated February 9, 1990.

S/ 10/12/93 by Dennis Smith for
John T. Farrar, M.D.
Acting Under Secretary for Health

Distribution: RPC 1333 is assigned
FD

Printing Date: 10/93

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11. DISTINGUISHED PHYSICIAN (DP) PROGRAM

PARAGRAPH	PAGE
11.01 Scope	11-1
11.02 Policy	11-1
11.03 Program Management	11-1
11.04 Nominations for Initial Appointment	11-1
11.05 Screening Committee	11-2
11.06 Requests to Extend Appointment	11-3
11.07 Appointment and Pay	11-3
11.08 Functions of DPs	11-3
11.09 DP Activity Schedules and Reports	11-4
11.10 Funding and Support	11-4
11.11 Research	11-5
11.12 References	11-5

RESCISSIONS

The following material is rescinded:

Manuals

M-2, Part I, Chapter 11, change 64, dated January 6, 1981, and Contents Page 11-i, dated February 9, 1990.

CHAPTER 11. DISTINGUISHED PHYSICIAN (DP) PROGRAM

11.01 SCOPE

This chapter contains policies, instructions, and procedures governing the DP Program.

11.02 POLICY

The DP program brings distinguished clinicians, educators, scientists and administrators on VA staff as advisors to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and health care facilities in the areas of health care delivery, academic education, research, and medical management. DP nominees are to be nationally and internationally recognized for their clinical, academic, scientific or administrative merit. The veterans Health Administration (VHA), through DPs, fosters scientific dialogue, promotes the advancement of medical knowledge and enhances the reputation of both the Department and its employees. DP involvement in these activities benefits veteran patients, as well as the general population. It also facilitates communication of research results and technological advances to the Nation's health care practitioners. (See 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) 7301-7303.)

11.03 PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

The DP program is managed by the Office of the Under Secretary for Health. Operational responsibility for implementation, administration, and periodic evaluation of the program is assigned to the Deputy Under Secretary for Health or designee. DPs will relate organizationally and administratively to the Deputy Under Secretary for Health, through the Director at the DPs host VA facility, in fulfilling their respective continuing roles as DPs. (See 38 U.S.C. 7304.)

11.04 NOMINATIONS FOR INITIAL APPOINTMENT

a. Nominations for DP appointments are made by VA facility Directors when vacancies are announced by the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary for Health. Vacancy announcements may restrict nominations to candidates in specific fields or specialties. In making their nomination, VA facility Directors may consider recommendations from any appropriate source, e.g., current DPs, affiliated medical schools, or medical specialty organizations.

b. Nominations must meet the following criteria:

(1) The candidate's career will demonstrate exceptional experience and expertise in at least two of the following areas:

(a) Clinical practice.

October 12, 1993

M-2, Part I
Chapter 11

M-2, Part I
Chapter 11

October 12, 1993

(b) Education and/or academic medicine.

(c) Research.

(d) Administrative or executive medicine.

(2) The candidate will be known nationally and/or internationally as an active and leading expert in at least one particular field of medicine, as evidenced by the nomination package and supporting evidence.

c. Nomination packages shall include:

- (1) Director's letter of nomination;
- (2) Letter of endorsement from the affiliate (if affiliated);
- (3) Statement from the candidate expressing interest in being considered for the position;
- (4) At least three, and no more than six, letters of support from medical center clinical staff and other appropriate individuals;
- (5) A plan (no longer than three pages) describing the professional activity to be pursued as a Distinguished Physician. The plan should represent collaboration between the facility Director and DP candidate. The planned activity will:
 - (a) Demonstrate a direct relevance for veterans and for the Department;
 - (b) Demonstrate creative, innovative approaches to issues or problems;
 - (c) Detail specific activities which will further the objectives and goals of the candidate's project; and
 - (d) Demonstrate potential to make seminal contribution(s) in a specific area or field of study.
- (6) Complete credentialing information for the nominee, as defined in the VHA supplement to MP-5, Part II, Chapter 2, Section C and other applicable VHA guidance regarding credentialing of physicians.
- (7) Official Personnel Folder of the nominee (if a current, former or retired Federal employee).

11.05 SCREENING COMMITTEE

a. A DP Screening Committee composed of members appointed by the Under Secretary for Health, or designee, including at least one current or former DP, will review the qualifications of DP nominees using the outlined criteria.

b. The DP Screening Committee chairperson will forward a list of nominees, through the VA Central Office Professional Standards Board, to the Under Secretary for Health, or designee, for review. Criteria listed under subparagraph 11.04b(5) will provide a framework for those final candidates to be ranked by the screening committee in order to identify the most suitable nominees for appointment.

October 12, 1993

M-2, Part I
Chapter 11

M-2, Part I
Chapter 11

October 12, 1993

c. The Under Secretary for Health, or designee, will forward, through the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, recommendation(s) for appointment. (See 38 U.S.C. 7304.)

NOTE: The Under Secretary for Health, or designee, is responsible for ensuring that the Screening Committee convenes as necessary to maintain the cadre of DPs at a level consistent with Department needs.

11.06 REQUESTS TO EXTEND APPOINTMENT

a. Extensions of DP appointments will only be approved if they result in a significant contribution to the care and treatment of veterans or the other goals specified in paragraph 11.04b(5). Requests for extensions shall be submitted by facility Directors through the appropriate Regional Director's Office (13_/10A2) and include:

(1) Director's recommendation;

(2) Statement from the candidate indicating why the extension is desired, and the DPs planned activities and accomplishments during the period of the extension. (The statement should represent a collaboration between the facility Director and DP candidate and should speak to both national and local activity. The statement should be also limited to three pages.); and

(3) The Official Personnel Folder of the DP.

(4) The current Credentialing and Privileging file of the DP.

b. Requests for extensions will be reviewed by the DP Screening Committee established under paragraph 11.05. The DP Screening Committee will forward its recommendation to the Under Secretary for Health, or designee, for review. The Under Secretary for Health, or designee, may forward, through the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration to the Secretary, the recommendation for extension of the DPs appointment. (See 38 U.S.C. 7304.)

11.07 APPOINTMENT AND PAY

Title 38 U.S.C. 7405 and VA Manual MP-5, Part II, Chapter 2 and its VHA Supplement provide the authority to appoint DPs. In accordance with this authority, DPs may be appointed by the Secretary for an initial period of 3 years. Such appointments may be extended by the Secretary for an additional period not to exceed 2 years under the procedures outlined in paragraph 11.06. DPs are placed in Medical Director grade Step 7, but are excluded from special pay eligibility (see VHA Supplement MP-5, Pt. II, Ch. 3, sec. A). (See 38 U.S.C. 7304 and 7405.)

11.08 FUNCTIONS OF DPs

a. DPs will further understanding and knowledge in their respective areas of expertise. The major focus of their work will contribute to addressing needs of veterans as well as initiatives and programs of VA. In a minor role, they may be utilized by the host facility to conduct local activities such as program reviews or advisory services when approved by the Deputy Under Secretary for Health, or designee.

b. Major activities of the DPs, consistent with goals and plans submitted in the DP nomination package, are selected with the concurrence of the facility Director as outlined in paragraph 11.04.

c. Distinguished physicians may:

(1) Serve as members of VA Central Office committees dealing with development of health care policy, program development, or resolution of program management problems;

(2) Serve as advisors to local, regional or national medical and health care education programs;

(3) Serve as lecturer-teachers on Regional Medical Education Center faculties;

(4) Conduct special purpose site visits for medical program reviews and recommend approaches for resolution of management problems related to clinical program activities;

(5) Advise VA Central Office and field facilities on the utilization of professional staff and the resolution of problems related to management of professional staff;

(6) Advise on affiliation matters;

(7) Serve on medical study groups and task forces, e.g., evaluate data related to issues of national interest such as that arising from health care policy, quality management activities, research projects, etc.; and/or

(8) Serve in such other capacities for which they have demonstrated expertise as may be germane to the needs of VA.

d. Any publications resulting from, or during, a DP's tenure will identify the individual as a VA DP. (See 38 U.S.C. 7304.)

11.09 DP ACTIVITY SCHEDULES AND REPORTS

a. While DPs are employees of VA Central Office, they are administratively and physically assigned to a host facility most geographically convenient for the DP to maintain and carry out planned activities.

b. DPs will submit annual progress reports, including copies of published works, through the appropriate Regional Director to the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary for Health, Professional Affairs Staff (13_/10A2).

c. A Program Assessment Committee chaired by the Deputy Under Secretary for Health, or designee, and consisting of at least one DP, will function as an oversight body, review program progress and issues, and make recommendations to the Under Secretary for Health, or designee.

(1) When feasible, an annual planning and report workshop will be conducted by the Committee to evaluate the program in terms of accomplishments, concerns and future directions.

(2) Any recommendations made by the Committee are prepared for consideration of the Under Secretary for Health, or designee.

d. When feasible, an annual meeting of DPs will be held. Such a meeting may be held in conjunction with a meeting of the Program Assessment Committee. DPs will participate in the planning of the annual meeting which will include among its goals interchange among the DPs. (See 38 U.S.C. 7403.)

11.10 FUNDING AND SUPPORT

The DP Program will be administered through centrally directed funding that supports the DPs salary, clerical support and specifically budgeted travel resources. Host facilities provide office space, furniture, equipment and may supplement travel funds.

VA facilities and non-VA institutions utilizing services of DPs will provide funding for travel and per diem costs. NOTE: Title 26 U.S.C. Section 501(c)(3), lists those tax exempt organizations which may pay travel and per diem costs. All other organizations not listed are restricted to payment-in-kind. All such activities of the DP's will conform to VA policy regarding outside professional activities (VHA Supplement MP-5, Pt. II, Ch. 13 and the "Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch," 5 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 2635). (See 38 U.S.C. 7304 and 7423.)

11.11 RESEARCH

a. DPs have the same privileges and obligations with regard to their personal research activities as do all other VA professional staff members. All research activities must be reviewed and approved, prior to initiation, by the host facility's Research and Development Committee and by the Human Studies Committee when patients or other human subjects are involved.

b. DPs are eligible to submit proposals for research support in a number of programs including Research Advisory Group (RAG) start up funding, cooperative studies, health services research, merit review and rehabilitation research. Application limitations apply to some programs, e.g., RAG funding must be requested in the first 6 months of appointment. (See 38 U.S.C. 7304.)

11.12 REFERENCES

- a. MP-5, Part II, Chapter 2 and the VHA Supplement.
- b. MP-5, Part II, Chapter 3, section B and the VHA Supplement.
- c. MP-5, Part II, Chapter 13 and the VHA Supplement.
- d. 5 CFR part 2635, "Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch."