

CHAPTER 2. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

2.01 CENTRAL OFFICE

a. The R&D (Research and Development) program is administered in Central Office by:

(1) The Office of the ACMD/R&D (Assistant Chief Medical Director for Research and Development), which is responsible for the overall planning, coordination, and direction of R&D activities within the Department of Medicine and Surgery. Included in this Office is the Chief, Veterinary Medical Officer, who is responsible for providing assistance in matters relating to animal medicine, science, and technology as well as to laboratory animal welfare.

(2) Medical Research Service, which, under the ACMD/R&D, is responsible for the development, administration, and coordination of the program of biomedical research and development.

(3) HSR&D (Health Services Research and Development) Service which, under the ACMD/R&D, evaluates alternative policies and interventions to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, accessibility, and quality of the VA health services delivery system, and of VA initiatives to promote, maintain, and improve the health of veterans.

(4) Rehab R&D (Rehabilitation Research and Development) Service which, under the ACMD/R&D, develops, administers, and coordinates a program that provides knowledge, techniques and devices to aid the ill and handicapped, including R&D programs in appliances, implants, and restorative and sensory-aid devices.

b. The Research Advisory Committee, including VA employees who have served on other R&D Committees and administrators from health care facilities, advises the ACMD/R&D and the R&D service directors on policies and procedures in the administration of the R&D program.

2.02 HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

a. The Director of each health care facility is responsible for the R&D program of that institution, advised and assisted by a R&D Committee. Ordinarily, the Director delegates authority to administer the R&D program to an appropriately designated executive, the ACOS/R&D (Associate Chief of Staff for Research and Development) or the C/R&D (Coordinator for Research and Development), through the Chief of Staff.

b. Research and Development Committee

(1) The R&D Committee is responsible through the Chief of Staff to the facility Director for maintaining high standards throughout the facility's R&D program. These standards include those assuring the scientific quality of the R&D projects, protection of human rights, laboratory safety, and welfare of animal subjects in research and development. It advises the Director on professional and administrative aspects of the R&D program. An R&D activities within the facility, whether funded or unfunded, are within its purview.

(2) In facilities affiliated with academic institutions, the membership of the R&D Committee consists of representatives appointed by the facility Director from each of the following groups:

(a) No less than one but no more than three members from the affiliated institution as representatives of the Deans Committee. When two or more schools are affiliated with the facility, their representatives collectively shall not exceed four members in total.

(b) At least two but no more than four members from the staff of the VA facility selected because they have major patient care or management responsibilities. Preferably they should also have training and experience in research.

(c) At least one but no more than three members who are VA employees selected because they are actively engaged in major R&D programs or can provide R&D expertise. They may hold appointments in the VA Career Development program.

(d) Whenever possible, one member of the committee selected according to the criteria listed above should have expertise in biostatistics and research design and another in animal research techniques and biomedical animal study settings: The members should have diverse backgrounds and include at least one nonphysician.

(e) Ex officio members are the Director, the Chief of Staff, and the Administrative Assistant to the ACOS/R&D of the facility, who have no vote, and the ACOS/R&D, who has a vote and functions as Executive Secretary.

(3) The R&D Committee in a facility without a Deans Committee has the same membership as above except that there are no representatives of the Deans Committee. Where there is a Medical Advisory Committee, it may recommend a representative.

(4) An independent outpatient clinic with an R&D program shall have an R&D Committee whose membership approximates as nearly as possible the above requirements.

(5) Members of R&D Committees other than those who are ex officio:

(a) Must be employees of the Federal Government with or without compensation.

(b) Must have a major commitment of their professional time to the VA, except for representatives of a Deans Committee or Medical Advisory Committee.

(c) Serve terms of not more than 3 years with not less than 1 year between terms. (This restriction does not apply to ex officio members.) The terms shall be staggered to provide partial change in membership annually.

(d) Annually elect a chairperson from the membership exclusive of ex officio members.

(e) Constitute subcommittees that include whenever appropriate:

1 .Subcommittee on Human Studies. (See par. 3.0le(1).)

2 .Subcommittee on Animal Studies. (See par. 3.0le(2).)

3 .Subcommittee on Safety.

(f) May utilize advisors who are selected for specific tasks and who do not have a vote.

(6) A facility with a limited R&D program will use the R&D Committee of the appropriate Regional R&D Office to advise the Director of the facility.

(a) The Director will arrange for assistance directly with the appropriate Regional R&D Office, and will notify the ACMD/ R&D when this is done.

(b) The Chief of Staff or C/R&D of the facility requesting assistance is responsible for providing such documents and other support as the cooperating R&D Committee needs to render assistance.

(7) In a few medical centers or clinics, the limited activity in education and in research and development may not justify separate Education and R&D Committees. The health care facility Director may then establish a Research and Education Committee to perform the functions of both committees. Membership of the single committee must represent the activities at the facility ordinarily under the jurisdiction of the separate committees. When the Director decides to establish a Research and Education Committee, the justification and the committee's composition must be submitted to the ACMD/R&D and to the Assistant Chief Medical Director for Academic Affairs through the usual channels. (See also M-8, pt. 1, par. 3.05i.)

2.03 RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE OF THE HEALTH CARE FACILITY

a. The position of ACOS/R&D (Associate Chief of Staff for Research and Development) is established in the Office of the Chief of Staff when authorized by the Chief Medical Director.

(1) The ACOS/R&D must be a physician unless the Chief Medical Director has granted an exception. In any event, the Chief Medical Director approves the appointment on the recommendation of the ACMD/R&D following nomination by the facility Director.

(2) In considering appointment of an ACOS/R&D, nomination of the R&D Committee and the Deans Committee, where one exists, will be considered by the Chief of Staff and Director. The nominee's credentials, including a curriculum vitae and recommendations, are then forwarded with a request for approval through appropriate channels to the ACMD/R&D.

(3) The ACOS/R&D, if new to such a position, is expected to participate in a training program within 6 months of appointment. The Office of the ACMD/R&D arranges the program, which the ACOS/R&D should request within the first 2 months of assuming his/her new duties.

(4) The ACOS/R&D may have patient care and teaching responsibilities but shall not have other major administrative responsibilities. The division of time must insure that adequate attention is given to R&D administration.

(5) The facility Director may appoint an Acting ACOS/R&D to serve while a new ACOS/R&D is sought for a vacant but authorized position. Use of the "acting" designation for longer than 6 months must be authorized by the ACMD/R&D.

b. The position of C/R&D (Coordinator for Research and Development) is established in the Office of the Chief of Staff in lieu of that of ACOS/R&D, usually when the R&D program is too small to justify the latter position.

(1) The C/R&D should be a professional member of the medical center or clinic staff who has had research experience.

(2) The facility Director appoints the C/R&D and notifies the ACMD/R&D of the appointment. Supporting documents including a curriculum vitae of the appointee, will accompany the notification.

(3) The Office of the Chief of Staff provides the clerical and administrative assistance needed by the C/R&D and is expected to supervise R&D functions.

c. An AA/ACOS/R&D (Administrative Assistant to the Associate Chief of Staff for Research and Development) may be employed if the position is approved by the Chief Medical Director.

(1) These positions are centralized to the Chief Medical Director (DM&S Supplement, MP-5, pt. 1, ch. 250). Appointments, position changes, and involuntary separations require the prior approval of the Chief Medical Director or designee in Central Office.

(2) Training and experience in health care administration and/or laboratory science are desirable. Prior familiarity with the VA's fiscal, supply, and personnel procedures and regulations is helpful. VA Central Office will arrange a training program before a new AA/ACOS/R&D assumes his/her full duties.

(3) While informal training opportunities are provided to incumbents as in subparagraph (2) above, there is a formal AA/ACOS (Administrative Assistant to the Associate Chief of Staff) Training Program. This program is structured to provide a planned approach to training individuals with potential to **fill** AA/ACOS/R&D for positions at VA medical facilities (TP 10-24, dated June 10, 1981). Preceptors and training sites are designated for each fiscal year and announcements of training - vacancies are made for the training facility.

d. Veterinary Medical Officer

(1) Health care facilities with animal facilities must have a veterinarian's services in order to meet requirements for proper animal care and welfare and to insure a satisfactory R&D environment. A health care facility with limited need for animal subjects may retain a consultant veterinarian with appropriate qualifications. Such a consultant may be found in an affiliated school. The Chief Medical Director or designee is the approving authority for the appointment of such consultants. (See DM&S Supplement, MP-5, pt. II, par. 2.1 lc(1)(d).)

(2) Facilities using large numbers of animals may propose establishing part-time Veterinary Medical Officer positions. The qualification requirements for these centralized positions are described in DM&S Supplement, MP-5, part 1, appendix 338A, GS 701-12/15.

e. Research Personnel. R&D within the VA is conducted by personnel whose principal functions are patient care, administration or other activities, as well as by persons whose principal function is scientific investigation.

(1) The clinical and administrative staffs of VA facilities are encouraged to conduct R&D and are expected to provide most of the principal investigators. They must be able to devote sufficient time to complete their R&D programs satisfactorily, but they generally can expect to receive technical and administrative help. No part of the salary of such an investigator whose primary duty is patient care or hospital management will be paid from R&D funds. Any exception must be approved by the Chief Medical Director. (See par. 1.03f.)

(2) Appointees in the Career Development Program are expected to devote most of their time to R&D but also to participate in patient care. They are paid from R&D funds. (See pt. 11, par. 3.03.)

(3) Nonclinician scientists paid from R&D funds are expected to devote most of their time to research and development. Their efforts, however, are to benefit patient care by any of several means, such as improving biomedical knowledge, assisting other professional or administrative personnel in their research programs, and by direct participation in health care activities, including committee membership.

(4) Consultants, attending physicians and other professionals holding appointments to the VA facility's staff are encouraged to participate in R&D projects as collaborating investigators with VA personnel. This research participation is WOC (without compensation) within the meaning of DM&S Supplement, MP-5, part 11, paragraph 2.19, even though the same person may receive compensation at other times as a clinical consultant or attending physician. Any exception requires approval by the Director of the appropriate R&D service in VA Central Office.

(5) Any physician or other professional person who participates in an R&D project with the VA staff must have an appointment by the facility Director on a WOC basic unless otherwise appointed as a staff member of the facility.

(6) Physicians and other professional personnel may be employed as special consultants or technical advisors and paid from R&D funds only when they are retained to participate in a consultative or technical fashion and not as investigators. They may be acknowledged in resulting publications but ordinarily are not authors.

(7) Other personnel, such as technical, wage rate, clerical, and administrative staff required for the R&D programs, may be paid from R&D funds.

(8) Nonprofessional personnel may be assigned to work in the R&D programs at the VA facility while employed by an affiliated school or university. Such personnel must be given WOC appointments by VA during the time they work at the VA facility. Conversely, VA nonprofessional personnel may be assigned to work outside the VA facility on a joint VA-university R&D project when that project has been approved by the local R&D Committee and the medical center Director and the worksite has been approved by Central Office.

2.04 REGIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICES

- a. The Eastern and Western Regional Research and Development Offices are geographically dispersed and provide administrative and scientific support to health care facilities with R&D programs of limited size and complexity.
- b. The Chief of the Regional R&D Office is a professional scientist with research experience; he/she is appointed by the Chief Medical Director.
- c. An administrative assistant in each office is an experienced administrative employee with sufficient research knowledge to act for the chief.
- d. A Regional R&D Committee is established by each office with membership approximating that described in paragraph 2.02b. The members include persons from the staffs of two or more VA health care facilities within the region.
 - (1) The Chief of the Regional R&D Office is an ex officio member of the committee, has a vote, and serves as executive secretary. The administrative assistant is also an ex officio member but has no vote.
 - (2) The committee establishes subcommittees that include, whenever appropriate:
 - (a) Subcommittee on Human Studies. (See par. 3.01e(1).)
 - (b) Subcommittee on Animal Studies. (See par. 3.01e(2).)
 - (3) The Regional R&D Office provides or arranges for staff and clerical support to its R&D Committee.