



Dear ACT for Veterans Stakeholders:

Even though the weather seems to be cooling down, ACT for Veterans activities are heating up! Over the past few weeks, there has been a flurry of activity happening both behind the scenes and front and center in a variety of platforms which we have summarized for you:

1. We have solicited the help of our workgroup managers to provide fresh perspectives and feedback on the proposed operational framework. Furthermore, we have recruited them to serve as volunteers to assist with the completion of the pilot. Our steering committee members have also reviewed the framework and we plan to meet next week to finalize Single Point of Contact (SPOC) Standard Operating Procedures. We remain on track to begin pilot testing of the process next month.
2. On September 1st, an article titled, “VA Gets Real on Reform” was published in Applied Clinical Trials. The article outlines several of the challenges that have prevented VA from being a preferred partner for industry sponsored clinical trials and highlights the efforts now being undertaken, including ACT, to address those issues. The article can be accessed at <http://www.appliedclinicaltrials.com/va-gets-real-reform>.
3. ACT for Veterans was presented at the following meetings and conferences:
  - a. VHA’s Specialty Care Service and Field Advisory Committees on September 11th.
  - b. Society of Federal Health Professionals (AMSUS) Sustaining Members on September 12th.
  - c. 27<sup>th</sup> Annual NAVREF Conference held September 15<sup>th</sup>- 18<sup>th</sup>.
4. As we prepare this update, the Association of VA Hematology/Oncology (AVAHO) is hosting its annual meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Although there is no formal ACT presentation planned, we are well represented- with several steering committee members in attendance. Dr. Mark Klein, co-lead of workgroup 3 serves as the President of the AVAHO Board of Directors and his insight and experience with AVAHO’s disease site committee review of industry sponsored trials has been instrumental to ACT. Their committee model is the foundation upon which we are establishing what we are calling “Clinical Evaluation Committees” in other therapeutic areas.
5. With oncology serving as the model, efforts to identify additional clinical priority areas and appropriate clinician-investigators and experts to serve on the corresponding Clinical Evaluation Committees are well underway. This effort is intended to help with better identifying the “fit” of potential trials with VA’s clinical needs, patient characteristics and other success factors. Multiple groups have expressed their interest to help establish committees and we anticipate more information to be available in the coming weeks.

Last, but not least, we’d like to extend a special message to Dr. Holly Birdsall, Chief Medical Officer within VHA’s Office of Research and Development. Dr. Birdsall is retiring from her position on September 30th. Holly has been a member of the ACT for Veterans Steering Committee and serves as a co-lead for Workgroup 4. She has played an instrumental role in getting the necessary approvals in place for the central Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) sign off process and we will miss her knowledge and experience. Best wishes on your retirement, Holly!

Rick Starrs  
CEO, NAVREF

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VA Office of Research and Development