

# Veteran Updates

## How Our Research Makes a Difference

The theme for National VA Research Week, May 19-23, is “VA Research: Making a Difference.”

Each year our research continues to make a difference in diagnosing, treating and preventing diseases, as we honor the service and empower the health of our Veterans.

The San Francisco VA Medical Center (SFVAMC) is the nation’s leading VA health research institute, with \$79 million in FY13 research expenditures, 230 principal investigators, 965 researchers, and 790 research projects.

Research conducted here is important because of its impact on the health care provided to our Veterans.

“The clinical diseases and problems we see at our Medical Center become the focus of our research, and our research improves medical care,” says **Carl Grunfeld, MD, PhD**, SFVAMC’s Associate Chief of Staff for Research and Development, and Chief, Division of Metabolism & Endocrinology.

“The fact that SFVAMC is at the forefront of research allows our patients to take advantage of the newest medical equipment, medicines, techniques and therapies before anyone else,” says Dr. Grunfeld.

The following are just a few awards and distinctions recently earned by our researchers:

SFVAMC neurologist and research scientist **Karunesh Ganguly, MD, PhD**,



*Carl Grunfeld, MD, PhD*

was recognized by President Obama at the White House on April 14, as a recipient of the Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers, the highest honor bestowed by the U.S. government on science and engineering professionals in the early stages of their independent research careers.

Dr. Ganguly studies new treatments for patients recovering with neurological conditions and injuries such as spinal cord injuries and strokes; and how machines can directly interact with paralyzed patients’ brains with the goal of restoring movement and cognitive abilities.

SFVAMC’s Chief of Geriatric Psychiatry, **Kristine Yaffe, MD**, Director of the Memory Disorders Clinic, recently was a featured speaker at the Global Action Against Dementia Summit held in the United Kingdom.

Dr. Yaffe was recognized by being named University of California, San Francisco’s (UCSF) Thirteenth Annual Faculty Research Lectureship – Clinical Science for her ground-breaking, patient-centered research on the causes and effects of dementia.

Dr. Yaffe, an internationally recognized leader in the field of dementia, has identified several modifiable dementia risk factors that lend to preventive strategies.

Geriatrician and researcher in the Division of Geriatrics at SFVAMC, **Michael Steinman, MD**, received the UCSF 2014 Academic Senate Distinguished Faculty Award—Distinction in Mentoring, Associate Professor Level, on April 23.

Dr. Steinman is Co-Director for Research and Director of Research Training for UCSF Division of Geriatrics.

His research involves measuring and improving how clinicians prescribe medications for clinically complex older adults.

## SFVAMC Research Discoveries

**Geriatrics:** Developed a tool that predicts likely years of good health in the elderly.

**Psychiatry:** Developed the first neuroscience-informed cognitive training that improves social functioning in schizophrenic patients.

**PTSD:** Demonstrated that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is accompanied by structural/functional changes in the brain.

**Smoking/Substance Abuse:** Defined the link to PTSD and demonstrated that combined therapy for PTSD, substance abuse, alcoholism and smoking was superior to separate referral.

**Bone Disease and Trauma:** Developed a therapy to speed nerve regeneration that improves fracture healing. Defined new pathways by which menopausal bone loss can be prevented.

**Women's Health:** Demonstrated where the risks of postmenopausal hormone therapy outweigh the benefits.

**Radiology:** Pioneered virtual colonoscopy.

**Dermatology:** Demonstrated that ceramides are beneficial to skin healing; developed ceramide-based skin cream.

**Rheumatologic Diseases:** Developed a therapy for autoimmune disease that plays a major role in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis.

## VA Partners with TechShop: Free Membership for Veterans

VA is collaborating with TechShop to provide 2,000 free, one-year memberships at six TechShop locations across the U.S. to Veterans of all eras. Veterans will have full membership privileges to use the wide array of equipment, such as milling, forming, cutting, welding, woodworking, electronics, and more.

Each free membership also includes \$350 in free group classes. Veterans can use TechShop's cutting edge training and equipment to become more competitive in the job market or pursue entrepreneurial goals. This effort supports VA's interest in finding new ways of providing Veterans with resources that help them serve an

important role in America's economy. TechShop is a membership-based, do-it-yourself workshop and fabrication studio that supports a growing community of makers and innovators.

### TechShop Locations in the Bay Area:

926 Howard Street  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
Phone: (415) 263-9161

120 Independence Drive  
Menlo Park, CA 94025  
Toll Free: (800) 640-1975

300 South 2nd Street  
San Jose, CA 95113  
Phone: (408) 916-4144

## What's Your Health Age?

How do your personal and family medical history and lifestyle choices affect your health? Take VA's new "healtheliving" assessment to find out.

This health assessment will show ways you can take action to have a longer, healthier life. Your "health age" is an estimate of how healthy you are compared with others your age based on factors like weight, diet, exercise, and health habits.

### Why should you take the assessment?

- It's confidential, safe and secure. Unless you want to share, no one has access to your answers and reports.
- It's quick, free, and easy. No appointments and no waiting – you can complete it online in about 20 minutes.
- It's informative and personalized. You

get specific recommendations on how to improve your health.

### How can you take the assessment?

- Log in to your online account at My HealthVet ([www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)). If you're new to the website, just register for an account.
- Click on the "healtheliving" assessment link.
- Complete the assessment and discover your health age today!

Your participation will NOT affect your VA health benefits or any other benefits. You can save and print your personalized health reports to discuss later with your personal health care team, or by using the "Share" option after you have completed the assessment. *This report is not a substitute for professional medical advice*



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