

## CSP Advancing Care

CSP aims to advance Veterans' health care while also providing solutions to national health care problems. More than 30 clinical studies are typically conducted within CSP at a given time. The program has been noted for its ability to provide definitive evidence to prevent and treat serious medical conditions and change clinical practice.

“[CSP’s] effectiveness in changing clinical practice rests on a foundation of ‘institutional completeness’ based on a unity of mission and wide range of services and functions housed under the single organizational structure of the Veterans [Health] Administration.”

—2006 “Best Practices Study Report” of the Inventory and Evaluation of Clinical Research Networks, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health.

Many CSP studies are head-to-head “comparative effectiveness” trials of two or more therapies to determine which works best in a certain group of patients. These comparative effectiveness trials, and other CSP studies, provide evidence-based information that can be used to enhance VA’s ability to provide continuously better health care. By giving VA providers evidence-based information about an intervention’s effectiveness, the research helps guide VA providers as they consider various health care options and inform patients to better enable them to participate in care decisions.

In addition, CSP plays a central role in the larger VA Research Genomic Medicine program, which aims to learn how patients’ genes influence their susceptibility to certain diseases, the progression of those diseases, and patients’ response to drugs or other treatments. As part of its overall genomic medicine initiative, CSP established a DNA bank and biorepository, where biological specimens are stored in a secure environment to support this type of research.

## Looking to the Future

Future directions for CSP involve expanding the program’s genomic medicine capacity and continuing to use cutting-edge research methods, including advanced research designs and data analysis techniques, to achieve innovative improvements in health care practice. Building on existing scientific understanding and applying rapidly evolving technologies, CSP research can be expected to play an increasing role in clinical decision-making and, ultimately, in enhancing health and care for Veterans and all Americans.



## More information?

For more information about the VA Cooperative Studies Program, please visit:

[www.vacsp.research.va.gov](http://www.vacsp.research.va.gov)

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Advancing Health Care  
through Multisite  
Collaborative  
Research Projects

## COOPERATIVE STUDIES PROGRAM



The Cooperative Studies Program, a division of VA’s Office of Research and Development, conducts multisite clinical trials and epidemiologic research on key health conditions impacting our nation’s Veterans. Through its collaborative studies, CSP aims to advance Veterans’ health, while also providing definitive solutions to national health care problems.


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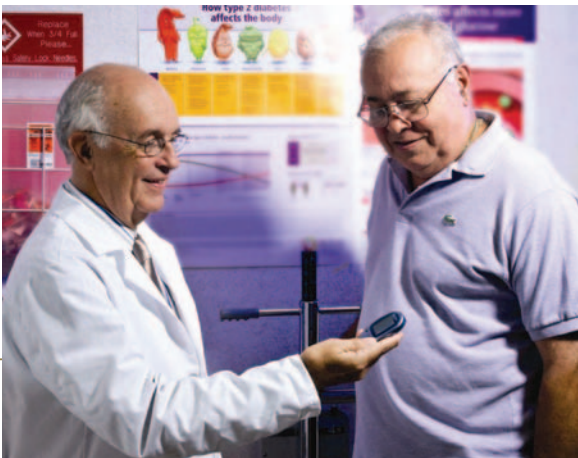




# Cooperative Studies Program

## Overview

 The Cooperative Studies Program (CSP), a division of VA's Office of Research and Development, is renowned for its large-scale, innovative clinical trials and its epidemiological studies (research looking at causes or risk factors for disease). While CSP was established in its present form in 1972, the program's roots date back to just after World War II, when its researchers conducted studies to evaluate effective treatments for tuberculosis. These tuberculosis studies were among the first-ever large-scale clinical trials. In the decades since, CSP has conducted numerous landmark health studies—many of which have appeared in prominent medical journals such as the *New England Journal of Medicine* and the *Journal of the American Medical Association*—that have advanced health care for Veterans and all Americans. The research has covered a wide range of health topics, such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes, infectious diseases, and mental health conditions.



### CSP studies that have greatly influenced clinical practice include:

- A series of studies that established the cornerstone for the treatment of high blood pressure.
- One of the first studies to determine the long-term effects of coronary artery bypass surgery.
- An investigative study of the use of steroids to treat patients with a life-threatening condition called septic shock.
- A landmark study showing that aspirin reduces heart attacks and deaths in patients with unstable chest pain.
- A study of a shingles vaccine involving more than 38,000 participants.
- A study that showed an invasive coronary procedure for heart patients adds no benefit over optimal drug therapy and lifestyle changes.
- A trial that showed the effectiveness of a type of psychotherapy for women Veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- A trial that found deep brain stimulation helpful for many patients with Parkinson's disease.

## Collaborations, Within and Outside of VA

CSP tackles important clinical questions through a network of VA investigators, many of whom are also clinicians, teamed with expert statisticians, epidemiologists, pharmacists, regulatory experts, and project managers.

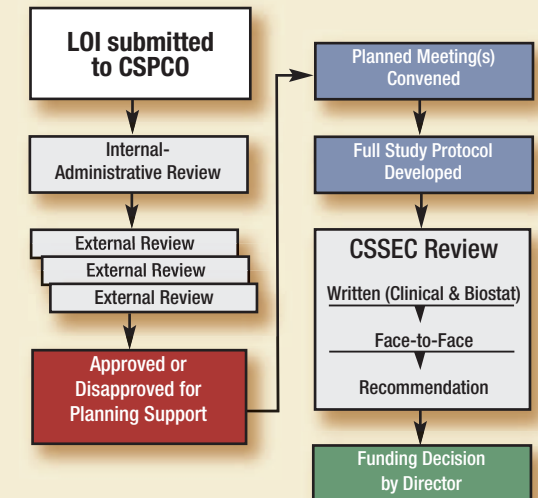
### CSP's infrastructure includes:

- Data and statistical coordinating centers.
- Epidemiological research centers.
- A pharmacy coordinating center.
- A DNA bank, biorepository, and pharmacogenomics analysis laboratory.
- A health economics resource center.

CSP investigators often collaborate with experts not only within VA, but outside the Department, to maximize the program's impact on health care practice. For example, CSP frequently collaborates with federal research partners such as the National Institutes of Health and the Department of Defense. In addition, CSP collaborates on studies with university affiliates; nonprofit organizations; pharmaceutical and biotechnology firms that have entered into cooperative research agreements with VA; and the national health agencies of other countries, such as Canada and the United Kingdom.

## Project Review Process

CSP research projects undergo a unique process of development, from initial concept to final protocol, to ensure that the studies meet the highest standards of scientific rigor. As the initial step in study development, experts from within and outside VA review an investigator's proposed study, described in a "letter of intent" (LOI), to ensure that the study is important to advancing care for Veterans and that its scientific approach and ethical considerations are well-defined. For those studies that are approved for development, CSP experts and investigators hold planning meetings during which they jointly design the study and develop a full study protocol. Next, a scientific committee—called the Cooperative Studies Scientific Evaluation Committee—reviews and critiques the proposal, and funding is provided for only the most relevant and highest quality research.



\* CSSEC: Cooperative Studies Scientific Evaluation Committee