UPDATE!

- First web-based Patient Survey launched in January, 2013 – moving from a paper format to an electronic format allows for a more rapid turnaround in data collection and analysis.
- “QR” Codes created to access the VACS Website and Index Risk Calculator

VACS IN THE NEWS


About VACS

The Veterans Aging Cohort Study (VACS) is an observational study that compares HIV-positive and HIV- negative veterans in care in the United States. The purpose of this study is to better understand HIV infection and how outside forces, such as alcohol use, smoking, and other diseases and infections, can influence the people living with HIV. The study consists of two cohorts, a “virtual cohort” that uses data from over 120,000 veterans, and a “living cohort” of over 7,000 veterans that actively participate and receive medical care at one of our nine VACS locations: Atlanta, Baltimore, Bronx, Brooklyn/Manhattan, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, and Washington DC. The information received from these cohorts has played a large role in increasing knowledge about HIV infection and the lives of those infected. We cannot thank our Veterans enough for their continued participation in this study.

Why is Participation Important?

The advances the VACS study has made over the course of its existence are very substantial; however there is still a long way to go. It is not only important to know about the conditions that often times go along with HIV infection, but also how to treat such conditions and ultimately improve quality of life. The information from our Veterans has allowed us to gain a vast amount of insight into aging with and without HIV infection, and we hope for their continued support and participation that will allow us to provide the best care possible.

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VA CT Healthcare System West Haven, Coordinating Center of the Veterans Aging Cohort Study.

Atlanta VA Medical Center, featured site

VA CT Healthcare System West Haven, Coordinating Center of the Veterans Aging Cohort Study.
Dr. Marconi received his BS degree in Microbiology and Cell Science from the University of Florida, and his MD from the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. He served in the United States Air Force from 2005-2009 as the Director of the HIV Medical Evaluation Unit and Research Program. Dr. Marconi serves as the Associate Medical Director for the Infectious Disease Program at the Grady Health System in Atlanta, Georgia. He is also a staff physician at the Atlanta Veterans Affairs Medical Center Infectious Disease Clinic which serves over 1400 patients with HIV. He is also a faculty physician and Associate Professor of Medicine for the Division of Infectious Diseases at Emory University School of Medicine. Dr. Marconi serves as the Associate Medical Director for the Infectious Disease Program at the Grady Health System in Atlanta, Georgia. He is also a staff physician at the Atlanta Veterans Affairs Medical Center Infectious Disease Clinic which serves over 1400 patients with HIV. He is also a faculty physician and Associate Professor of Medicine for the Division of Infectious Diseases, Emory University School of Medicine and jointly an Associate Professor of Global Health at the Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University. The main focus of Dr. Marconi's research is to identify the underlying biological and socioeconomic conditions which lead to differences in HIV treatment response for populations in the U.S. and in Durban, South Africa. The ultimate goals of this work are to improve patient care and further characterize the pathogenesis of HIV.

Rondeen Mindley has served as the lead VACS Coordinator at the Atlanta VA Medical Center since 2006. Rondeen received her MPH from the University of Kentucky. She will be moving on to a new position this spring. We would like to take this opportunity to thank her for all the contributions to our VACS team and wish Rondeen the best in her new endeavor.

Christopher Rentsch is an Epidemiologist at the Atlanta VA Medical Center. He regularly performs epidemiologic and statistical tasks for the VACS as well as the HIV Atlanta VA Cohort Study (HAVACS). In this position, Christopher has worked on a number of collaborative research projects and has presented original methodological research at an international workshop conference.

The Atlanta location is one of our nine VACS sites across the country, and is located within the Atlanta VA Medical Center. Dr. David Rimland is the Principal Investigator at the Atlanta VACS site, working closely with Co-Principal Investigator, Dr. Vincent Marconi and Site Coordinators, Rondeen Mindley and Christopher Rentsch. The Infectious Disease Program serves a clinic population of over 5,000 patients with HIV in Atlanta.
Publicity: The VACS Index has gained recognition on a national and international level. Our most recent publications are listed below. (Links to articles located on next page)

- The VACS Index: An internationally generalizable risk index for mortality after one year of antiretroviral therapy. Tate JP, Justice AC, Hughes MD, Bonnet F, Reiss P, Mocroft A, Nattermann J, Lampe FC, Bucher HC, Sterling TR, Crane H, Kitahata MM, May M, Sterne JAC. *AIDS* 2013 Feb; 27(4):563-572. This paper uses data from ART-CC and reports the points recommended for VACS Index components among HIV infected individuals on ART and demonstrates the reproducible accuracy (discrimination) of the VACS Risk Index overall and among important patient subgroups. It also explores the predictive discrimination of the VACS Index by specific causes of death demonstrating that the VACS Index is more discriminating for both HIV and non HIV causes of death than an index restricted to CD4 count, HIV-1 RNA, and age.


- Risk factors for hospitalization and medical intensive care unit (MICU) admission among HIV infected Veterans. Akgun KM, Gordon K, Pisani M, Fried T, McGinnis KA, Tate JP, Butt AA, Gibert CL, Huang L, Rodriguez-Barradas MC, Rimland D, Justice AC, Crothers K. *J Aquir Immune Defic Syndr* 2013 Jan; 62(1):52-59. This paper demonstrates the predictive accuracy (discrimination) of the VACS Index for major morbidity (hospitalization and MICU admission) among HIV infected veterans. It finds that other factors predictive of these events include certain comorbid diagnoses and AIDS defining Illnesses.

OTHER SOON-TO-BE PUBLISHED VACS INDEX PAPERS:


Upcoming 2013 Conferences

**2013 Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections – March 3-6:** The 20th Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI) will be held in Atlanta, Georgia in March 2013. VACS and affiliated cohorts are involved in 20 presentations and two young investigator awards. Dr. Matthew Freiberg will be co-moderating an oral abstract session which focuses on Cardiovascular Disease and other Non-AIDS events.

- April 11-13 – 17th International Workshop on HIV Observational Databases (IWHOD) in Cavtat, Croatia
- April 24-27 – 36th Annual Society of General Internal Medicine (SGIM) Meeting in Denver, Colorado
- June 15-20 – 75th Annual Meeting of the College on Problems of Drug Dependence (CPDD) in San Diego, California
- June 22-26 – 36th Annual Scientific Meeting of the Research Society on Alcoholism (RSA) in Orlando, Florida
VACS Patient Newsletter

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Article Links:

Affiliated Programs & Resources:
- Center for Interdisciplinary Research on AIDS: http://www.cira.med.yale.edu
- American Foundation for AIDS Research (AMFAR): http://www.amfar.org
- Project Inform: http://www.projectinform.org
- US Department of Veterans Affairs: http://www.va.gov
- National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse: http://www.niaaa.nih.gov

Funding and Affiliated Funding Sources:
VACS is funded primarily by the National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse, National Institutes of Health. The study has a special focus on the role of alcohol use and abuse in determining clinical outcomes. This project is also funded in kind by the US Department of Veterans Affairs and by supplemental support from the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Cancer Institute and the Medical Research Council.

Funding and Affiliated Funding Sources:

Please visit the VACS website at www.vacohort.org
For any questions or concerns please contact Angela Consorte at angela.consorte@va.gov or 203.932.5711 ext. 3541