VACS IN THE NEWS

In Follow-up to ID Week, October 2-6, 2013:
- *Infectious Disease News* wrote an article about Jen Edelman's oral presentation entitled, “Polypharmacy associated with mortality in HIV”.

Recent Presentations

75th Annual College on Problems of Drug Dependence (CPDD), San Diego, California, June 15-20, 2013:
- Todd Korthuis’s talk entitled, “Quality of HIV care and mortality in HIV-infected patients who use drugs and alcohol”.

36th Annual Research Society on Alcoholism (RSA) Meeting, Orlando, Florida, June 22-26, 2013:
- Amy Justice’s talk entitled, “Multimorbidity, alcohol, HIV/AIDS and non AIDS malignancies”.
- Kathy McGinnis’s talk entitled, “Comparing AUDIT zone cutoffs among HIV infected and uninfected men”.

8th Annual National Conference on HIV/AIDS & Aging at the John F. Kennedy Library and Museum, September 27, 2013:
- Amy Justice gave a keynote presentation entitled, “Aging and HIV: The next challenge”.

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 may 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.

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.
Maria Rodriguez-Barradas
PI Houston Site

Dr. Rodriguez-Barradas is the Principal Investigator at VACS Houston, a position she has held since the study’s inception in 1997. She is currently the Chief of Infectious Diseases at the Michael E. DeBakey VAMC (MEDVAMC) in Houston, where she oversees the Infectious Diseases clinics, consult service, and fellowship program. Dr. Rodriguez-Barradas actively participates in nine special emphasis workgroups within VACS and has earned authorship on more than thirty papers. She is also Professor of Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine. Dr. Rodriguez-Barradas has clinical, teaching and research responsibilities with the General Medicine and Infectious Diseases Sections at the MEDVAMC, and within the College. She has been an active investigator in NIH and VA sponsored studies of HIV disease and its complications for over 20 years.

Nicholas Masozera
Co-PI Houston Site

Dr. Nicholas Masozera is the Co-Principal Investigator at the Michael E. DeBakey VAMC (MEDVAMC), a position he has held since 2002. He is currently the Chief of Primary Care and oversees all the Primary Care clinics, the OEF/OIF Clinic, the Homeless Clinic, the Telehealth Program and the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Program for the Facility. He is currently Associate Professor of Medicine in the Division of General Medicine at the Baylor College of Medicine. Dr. Masozera is active as a Clinician Educator in the residency program and has an interest in behavioral interventions to improve patient care. He has been active in supporting VACS studies at the Houston site and has been particularly instrumental in the implementation of the VACS projects in the Primary Care Clinics.

Cynthia Rose
Coordinator

Cynthia Rose has been a part of the VACS research team since 2001, and during the last 10 years, she has been the site coordinator at the VA in Houston. She is also a part of the EXHALE project. Before coming to the VA, Cynthia worked in the clinical setting with General Medicine and Infectious Disease patients.

Barbara Kertz
Coordinator

Barbara Kertz joined VACS in 2009. Prior to joining VACS, she worked with VA researchers at the Houston Center for Quality of Care and Utilization Studies on studies on bipolar disorder and dementia in veterans. In addition to helping with VACS, Barbara is the lead coordinator on EXHALE, a VACS sub-study.

FEATURED SITE: HOUSTON

The Houston location is one of our nine VACS sites across the country, and is located within the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center. Dr. Maria Rodriguez-Barradas is the Principal Investigator, and works with Dr. Nicholas Masozera, Co-Principal Investigator, and Site Coordinators, Cynthia Rose and Barbara Kertz.
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)


This analysis compared levels of social isolation in aging veterans with and without HIV. We found that social isolation is associated with greater risk of hospitalization and death in HIV infected than uninfected older veterans. Although the two groups have similar effects, the population-level effect of social isolation may be higher in those who are HIV infected because of the higher prevalence of social isolation, mostly found in older individuals. This analysis was important because people infected with HIV are living longer due to anti-HIV medications. Healthcare systems will need to prepare for the large number of HIV infected individuals and understand their specific risks.


A prediction algorithm using available laboratory data can be used to accurately identify ART-naive patients in large observational cohorts. This algorithm allows investigators to accurately limit analyses to ART-naive patients when studying the contribution of ART to outcomes and adverse events.


In a comparison of men and women in VA, women experienced less improvement in overall burden of disease after one year of HIV treatment. Further analysis will be needed to explain this disparity.


HIV, prehypertensive and hypertensive blood pressure was associated with an increased acute myocardial infarction (AMI) in a cohort of HIV infected and uninfected veterans.


Most HIV infected individuals in care are on five or more medications and at risk of harm from polypharmacy, a risk that likely increases with number of medications, age, and physiologic frailty. Literature on polypharmacy in HIV infected patients is limited. There are adaptations that need to be made to literature on non-HIV infected individuals for special issues facing those on chronic ART.
VACS Patient Newsletter

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Article Links:

Affiliated Programs & Resources:
- Center for Interdisciplinary Research on AIDS: [http://www.cira.med.yale.edu](http://www.cira.med.yale.edu)
- Project Inform: [http://www.projectinform.org](http://www.projectinform.org)
- US Department of Veterans Affairs: [http://www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

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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](http://www.vacohort.org)
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