



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



VA North Texas Healthcare System, featured site

## 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.

Veterans Aging Cohort Study  
950 Campbell Ave (11ACSL-G)  
Building 35A  
West Haven, CT 06516  
<http://medicine.yale.edu/intmed/vacs/>

E: [angela.consorte@va.gov](mailto:angela.consorte@va.gov)  
P: 203-932-5711 ext. 3541  
F: 203-937-4926



## GRANT NEWS

- The funding for the VACS research was just continued with a new 11 million dollar grant to allow the VACS project to continue into 2021. This Yale-led research consortium was granted by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Institutes on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), and will build upon the previous work of this existing 15-year study. ([link on last page](#))
- The National Cancer Institute approved a major grant for research led by principal investigators Dr. Amy Justice and Dr. Vincent Lo Re. This project will explore Liver Cancer (Hepatocellular Carcinoma) among veterans who are infected and uninfected with HIV. The NCI grant provides 3 million dollars of support through 2021. ([link on last page](#))

## VACS and Affiliated Cohorts Involvement in Upcoming Conferences

**The next VACS Scientific Meeting will be held on December 11-13, 2016 in Washington, DC.**

**23rd Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI), Seattle, Washington, February 13-16, 2017:**

- Ten presentations including:
  - One oral presentation
  - Nine poster presentation

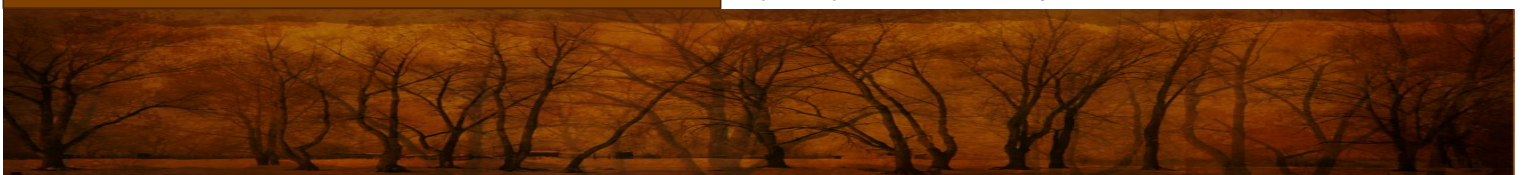


**American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Care Medicine), Phoenix, Arizona, February 22-25, 2017:**

- VACS will be presenting two poster presentations at the meeting.

## 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 and without HIV. The study consists of two cohorts, a “virtual cohort” that uses data from over 160,000 veterans, and a “living cohort” of over 9,000 veterans that actively participate and receive medical care at one of our eight VACS locations: Atlanta, Bronx, Brooklyn/Manhattan, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Nashville, and Washington DC. The information collected from these cohorts has played a large role in increasing knowledge about HIV infection and aging and the lives of those infected. We cannot thank our Veterans enough for their continued participation in this study.



# VACS Patient Newsletter

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## Roger Bedimo Dallas Site PI



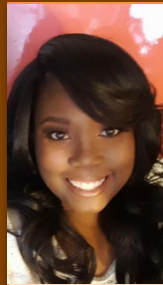
Dr. Roger Bedimo, MD is the Principal Investigator at VACS Dallas, a position he has held since 2012. He serves as Associate Professor of Medicine, Division of Infectious Disease, at the University of Texas Southwestern. Dr. Bedimo is the Chief of Infectious Disease Section at the Veteran Affairs North Healthcare System in Dallas, Texas. He's member of the DHHS Panel on Antiretroviral Guidelines. Dr. Bedimo's research interests include analyses of rates and mechanisms of chronic complications of HIV disease, including cardiovascular disease, bone mineral loss and non-AIDS malignancies.

## Teagan Lampkin Dallas Site Coordinator



Teagan Lampkin, BA, has been a part of the VACS study for over three years, and has served the lead site coordinator at VACS Dallas for the last two years. She has been involved with different aspects of COMpAAAS, including sub studies, and is also the lead coordinator on the Integrated Stepped Care protocol. She is currently responsible for keeping track of over 500 VACS patients, patient recruitment, scheduling visits, data entry and IRB submission/protocol implementation. Her welcoming disposition and clear dedication to Infectious Disease research goes hand in hand with making her not only a great asset to Dr. Bedimo's team, but a champion at working diligently with patients in the Infectious Diseases

## Ashley Liggion-Turk Dallas Site Coordinator



Ashley Liggion-Turk, BSc, is a site coordinator at VACS Dallas. She is responsible for recruiting patients and scheduling appointments for veterans to take part in the quality of life protocol in HIV subjects. She is responsible for ensuring organization, coordination, and overall integrity of the study. Her motivation and dedication to the study and study subjects shows her compassion to help others and her willingness to find solutions within the research field. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from Tuskegee University and currently attends Walden University to pursue a Masters in Healthcare Administration.

## Dindi Moore-Matthews Dallas Site Coordinator



Dindi Moore-Matthews, MS is a site coordinator (Infectious Diseases) at VACS Dallas, a position held since 2015. She is the support coordinator for VACS/COMpAAAS and Integrated Stepped Care clinical trials. Dindi is primarily responsible for regulatory requirements for all studies at VACS Dallas. She considers herself a novice in research, but not in HIV/AIDS field where she has a total of 9 years' experience working in direct patient care and administration. Dindi has discovered in the past year that in order to be successful in research one must learn to effectively communicate, remain engaged, maintain organization and be open to change.

## FEATURED SITE: DALLAS

The Dallas site is one of our eight VACS sites across the country, and is located within the VA North Texas Healthcare System. Dr. Roger Bedimo is the Principal Investigator, and works with Site Coordinators, Teagan Lampkin, Ashley Liggion-Turk, and Dindi Moore-Matthews.

## PEOPLE NEWS

### Vincent Lo Re, III



Vincent Lo Re, III, MD, is the recipient of the 2016 HIVMA Research Award, presented in October at the ID Week Meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana. This award recognizes members who have made outstanding contributions to HIV medicine in clinical or basic research early in their careers. ([link on last page](#))

### Joyce Chang



Joyce Chang, PhD, was named Statistician of the Year in September from the Pittsburgh Chapter of the American Statistical Association at the University of Pittsburgh, Department of Medicine, Division of General Internal Medicine. This prestigious award is given to one awardee per year from across University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon University, and statisticians in private industry throughout the city. ([link on last page](#))

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## Article Publicity:

Over the course of 15 years, the information obtained through the VACS study has gained recognition on a national and international level. Our most recent publicity can be seen below. (Links to news on this page can be found on the VACS website: <http://medicine.yale.edu/intmed/vacs/impact/>)

- Amy Justice et al.'s article published in Drug Alcohol Depend entitled, "Risk of mortality and physiologic injury evident with lower alcohol exposure among HIV infected compared with uninfected men", has received the following publicity:

- Yale: Research in the news
- Philly.com's HealthDay
- WFMJ's Health Section
- Health24
- U.S. News and World Report

- Julie Gaither et al.'s article published in Journal of General Internal Medicine entitled, "The Association Between Receipt of Guideline-Concordant Long-Term Opioid Therapy and All-Cause Mortality" has received the following publicity:

- YaleNews
- Top news story on the American Society of Addiction Medicine, ASAM Weekly

- Amy Justice and VACS were included in the 2015 Annual Research Report, published by the VA New England Healthcare System in an article titled, "VACS: Pioneering HIV Research Efforts".

Oxford University Press was granted permission to use Bianca Yuh et al.'s article entitled, "Weight change after antiretroviral therapy and mortality," in a Nutrition CME on HIV/AIDS.

- Matthew Freiberg et al.'s article published by PLoS One entitled, "D-Dimer Levels before HIV Seroconversion Remain Elevated Even after Viral Suppression and Are Associated with an Increased Risk of Non-AIDS Events" was featured on New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM) Journal Watch in a review by Keith Henry.

- Kathy McGinnis et al.'s article published in AIDS and Behavior entitled, "Number of Drinks to "Feel a Buzz" by HIV Status and Viral Load in Men" was featured on aidsmap in an article by Keith Alcorn entitled, "Moderate alcohol consumption may be more harmful to people with HIV."

- Lesley Park et al.'s article published in AIDS entitled, "Prevalence of non-HIV cancer risk factors in persons living with HIV/AIDS: a meta-analysis" was featured on aidsmap in an article by Michael Carter.

## Related News:

### MVP



The VA Million Veteran Program is now the largest genomic biobank in the world. The White House press release mentions "500,000 veterans have voluntarily donated their health data to the future of science and medicine through the VA's Million Veteran Program (MVP), marking a critical halfway point to the goal of signing up one million veterans.") Of note, the White House press release was timed to coincide with the President's presentation at the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) national convention in Atlanta earlier that week (that also mentioned the project). See photo (above) from the DAV event taken just before the President's remarks.

### Opioid Epidemic



- David Fiellin and William Becker attended a press conference (pictured above) hosted by Yale University's Schools of Medicine and Public Health, convened by Connecticut Governor Daniel P. Malloy to receive the state's final report and strategic plan on fighting the opioid epidemic. Ziba Kashef covered the news in an article.

- David Fiellin, a leading expert in addiction medicine, was featured in an article by Jenny Chen from Yale University School of Medicine for helping Connecticut address the opioid crisis.

- Geetanjoli Banerjee et al.'s article published by Addiction entitled, "Non-medical use of prescription opioids is associated with heroin initiation among US veterans: a prospective cohort study" was featured on the International Business Times (IBT) in a short story by Seerat Chabba.

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## Article Links:

- VACS grant extension into 2021: <http://news.yale.edu/yale-researchers-receive-11-million-grants-study-aids-alcohol-and-aging>
- NCI grant coverage by YaleNews: <http://news.yale.edu/amy-justice-awarded-research-grant-study-liver-cancer-and-hivon>
- Vincent Lo Re's HIVMA Award: <http://finalprogram.idweek.org/i/737745-2016/42>
- Joyce Chang, Statistician of the Year, University of Penn: [http://dom.pitt.edu/dgim/DGIM\\_News/StatisticianOfTheYear.html](http://dom.pitt.edu/dgim/DGIM_News/StatisticianOfTheYear.html)

## Affiliated Programs & Resources:

- Center for Interdisciplinary Research on AIDS: <http://www.cira.med.yale.edu>
- Estimating Prognosis for Elders: <http://www.ePrognosis.org>
- American Foundation for AIDS Research (AMFAR): <http://www.amfar.org>
- National Institute of Health, Office of AIDS Research: <http://www.nih.gov/od/oar>
- Project Inform: <http://www.projectinform.org>
- National AIDS Treatment Advocacy Project: <http://www.natap.org>
- US Department of Veterans Affairs: <http://www.va.gov>
- National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse: <http://www.niaaa.nih.gov>
- The Graying of AIDS: <http://www.grayingofaids.org/>
- Antiretroviral Therapy Cohort Collaboration (ART-CC): <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/art-cc/>
- North American AIDS Cohort Collaboration on Research and Design (NA-ACCORD): <http://statepiaps.jhsph.edu/naaccord/>

## 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 sources listed below.

## QR Codes access the VACS Website and Index Risk Calculator:



QR Code for VACS  
Homepage



QR Code for VACS  
INDEX CALCULATOR



QR Code for VACS  
INDEX CALCULATOR-  
MOBILE APP



1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

Telephone 1-800-273-8255 Press 1

Text message to 838255

Online at: <http://www.veteranscrisisline.net>

## Funding and Affiliated Funding Sources:



National Institute  
on Alcohol Abuse  
and Alcoholism



National Institute of  
Allergy and  
Infectious Diseases



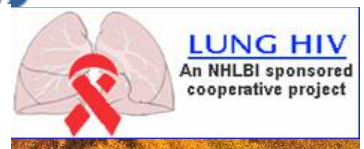
National Heart, Lung,  
and Blood Institute



National Institute  
of Mental Health



National Institute  
on Drug Abuse  
*The Science of Drug Abuse & Addiction*



**NIH NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE**

Please visit the VACS website at <http://medicine.yale.edu/intmed/vacs/>  
For any questions or concerns please contact Angela Consorte at  
[angela.consorte@va.gov](mailto:angela.consorte@va.gov) or 203.932.5711 ext. 3541

