



NAEVR

National Alliance For
Eye And Vision Research

Serving as Friends of the National Eye Institute

12300 Twinbrook Parkway
Suite 250
Rockville MD 20852
240-221-2905; www.eyerresearch.org

NAEVR URGES THAT FY2010 DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS:

- **Maintain “Peer Reviewed Vision Research” as a dedicated line item within the Department of Defense and increase its funding to \$10 million.**
- **Fund the Military Vision Center of Excellence and Eye Trauma Injury Registry at \$6.8 million.**

Peer Reviewed Vision Research

- In Fiscal Year (FY) 2009, vision research was pulled out of the larger Peer Reviewed Medical Research Program (PRMRP) within CDMRP and listed separately as Peer Reviewed Vision Research, funded at \$4 million.
- In FY2006 and FY2008 (program not funded in FY2007), vision research competed effectively with the 20 other areas of research within the PRMRP for the \$50 million pool of funds. In FY2006, DOD awarded vision researchers eight grants totaling \$7.5 million. In FY2008, DOD awarded vision researchers 6 grants totaling \$6 million. These were primarily for clinical and translational research, reflecting their importance in addressing the immediate needs of troops in the battlefield.
- Examples of vision research grants awarded include: corneal (healing, protection for burn patients, and improvements in transplantation); retinal (treatment of laser-induced retinal injuries; retinal neuro-protective factors introduced via a non-invasive ocular drug delivery system, and retinal implants); battlefield repair of penetrating eye injuries; development of a vitreous substitute; and treatments for age-related macular degeneration (AMD).
- In current battlefield conditions, ground soldiers face a variety of assaults that could potentially damage their eyes and impair visual function short- and long-term:
 - Traumatic eye injury from explosive devices/projectiles (e.g., 16 percent of wartime injuries affect the eye—those with optic nerve trauma are the most severe) and visual disorders associated with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI, with visual symptoms reported in 80 percent of all TBI cases);
 - Eye injury from chemical, biohazard and laser exposure; and
 - Extreme environmental conditions that can affect eye injury healing or cause dry eye and its potential for corneal abrasion and infection.

Vision, the sense most critical for optimal military performance, is most vulnerable to injury, both acute and chronic. The treatment of acute eye injury can determine the extent of resulting vision impairment or chronic eye disease and the associated need for vision rehabilitation. As a result, the ability to effectively treat acute eye damage can have long-term implications for an individual’s vision health, productivity, and quality of life for the remainder of their military service and into their civilian lives.

Military Vision Center of Excellence (VCE) and Eye Trauma Injury Registry

- Although the FY2008 National Defense Authorization Act authorized the establishment within the DOD of a “Military Eye Trauma Center of Excellence and Eye Trauma Registry,” no directed funding was included in the FY2009 DOD appropriations.
- The VCE should be funded at \$6.8 million within the DOD appropriations. The VCE will coordinate its efforts with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), including joint DOD/VA programs for members of the Armed Services and veterans for eye injuries, trauma, and disease, as well as coordination of TBI-related vision screening, diagnosis, treatment, and research.
- The Eye Trauma Injury Registry will yield important information on the number and nature of injuries. This information can ultimately be used by the DOD’s Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program to develop a profile of research needs to be met through solicitation of grant proposals in the Peer Reviewed Vision Research program.

In creating the Military Vision Center of Excellence and Eye Trauma Injury Registry, Congress recognized the devastating nature of the eye injuries being experienced in the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. Funding this program at \$6.5 million in FY2010 will enable the VCE to implement the joint DOD/VA programs to address these programs to save and restore vision.