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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

4 p.m. PDT March 5, 2014

VA Puget Sound Researchers Bring Additional Funding to Area

For the second time in three years a VA Puget Sound Health Care System researcher has received the Veteran’s Health Administration’s highest award for clinical research infusing thousands of dollars into local investigative efforts that could improve the lives of millions of Veterans and non-veterans.

Steven Kahn, staff physician at the VA, was recently named the 2013 Barnwell awardee, which comes with a three-year \$150,000 research stipend to further his work. Kahn was given this award recently by the VHA’s Clinical Science Research & Development (CSR&D) Service of the Office of Research and Development for his work in better understanding glucose metabolism and work in type 2 diabetes prevention. The additional research funding from the VHA starts this year.

“This will allow us to pursue some new research ideas,” said Kahn of the funds which can be used without restriction. “We can think out of the mainstream and explore some new areas.”

The VHA’s Clinical Research team noted Kahn’s 27-years’ work as “a major reason for the phenomenal success of the Diabetes Prevention Program.”

In 2011, the VA’s Dr. Murray Raskind was given the award for his work in the use of prazosin to treat nightmares in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder patients. Raskind, also a clinician-scientist with VA for the past 27 years, was honored for his work on the biochemical pathways involved in posttraumatic stress disorder, Alzheimer’s disease, and alcoholism. In particular, he was cited for spearheading the use of the inexpensive generic drug prazosin to treat PTSD nightmares.

Between the two awards, \$300,000 has come into the VA Puget Sound Health Care System to advance research efforts.

“It’s a significant honor to have even one recipient, but we have two and it speaks to the strength of our research efforts here at the VA,” said Dr. William Campbell, VA Puget Sound Medical Director.

Raskind and Kahn's research efforts have brought very different groups of Veterans medical help through their efforts. For Raskind, his work has helped many Vietnam Veterans and newly returning Veterans diagnosed with PTSD, relief from terrible nightmares from which they suffer as a result of their military experience.

For the Veterans of all ages, Kahn's work in diabetes prevention could pave the way for earlier diagnosis and even prevention.

The research efforts in both of these cases have the potential to not only greatly improve the lives of Veterans, but also of the general population. Dr. Raskind said the use of prazosin has potential for use in treatment of other conditions involving the rush of adrenaline during the sleep process and Kahn's work in diabetes prevention could have lasting impacts on the more than 74 million Americans who have prediabetes.

The Barnwell Award, established in 2007, to honor John Blair Barnwell, M.D., distinguished educator and physician-scientist, was the Director of Research and Education at the Veterans Administration (now the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)) Central Office in the 1940s. Dr. Barnwell's contributions to VA include leadership, inspired enthusiasm and passion for the care of patients and the goal of top-level research within the VA. The Barnwell Award is given for outstanding scientific achievements in clinical research that advance the diagnosis and treatment of diseases and disorders in the veteran population.

For more information about the researchers' work contact the VA Puget Sound Public Affairs office at 206-764-2589.