

Criteria for Reviewing R&D Grants

The purpose of the R&D Committee is to require high standards for work performed in the Research Service. Through grant review we endeavor to promote scientific quality, lab safety and animal welfare and protection of human rights. The following suggestions are to help the Committee members structure their reviews to meet this purpose.

Three types of grants are currently reviewed by the R&D Committee (grants administered through the VA, the Atlanta Research and Education Foundation (AREF) and Emory University). The main aims and specific objectives of all grants should be determined for the Committee's information. The impact on the VA (cost, space, applicability) should be assessed. The completion of other necessary documents (human subjects, consent forms, animal approval, biohazard, radiation) should be noted.

1. VA grants: these consist mainly of Merit Reviews which are either Medical, Rehab R&D or HSR&D. Grants will either be first submissions, renewals or resubmissions. The Committee would like a fairly detailed review of VA grants from the primary and secondary reviewer. The review should be aimed at helping the applicant improve their submission. In general —

Is the grant well conceived?

Is the language clear, is the grant construction strong?

Do the specific aims make sense?

Is the work proposed reasonable?

Is the budget reasonable?

Has the investigator successfully addressed the grant towards specific VA patient problems?

Is the grant fundable?

Attempt to score the submission - <15%, 15-25%, 25-40%, >40%.

If possible, the primary reviewer should contact the investigator to review the grant and offer advice.

2. AREF grants: these grants are supported by many different granting institutions. Most of the AREF grants have been industry based, but we have had grants from the American Heart Association, for instance, administered by AREF by the investigator's choice. Because the AREF relies on the R&D Committee to maintain a high level of scientific integrity in the grants it administers, it is important that these grants receive a reasonable review of the scientific merit. However, since the R&D Committee rarely sees the grant before submission, and because of the nature (pharmaceutical/multi-institution) of many of these grants, the review should be more administrative in content. Specific questions —

Is the science appropriate to be carried out at the VA?

Are there patient care considerations?

Is the patient care part of the grant completely safe for our veterans?

What is the budget?

3. Grants administered by Emory: The R&D Committee rarely sees these grants prior to their submission, therefore, unless asked specifically by the investigator, it is unreasonable to expect the Committee members to give a detailed review of the scientific merit of the grant. Attention should be directed as to the impact of this grant on the VA and successful completion of accessory documents.

4. Clinical Studies, please address the following:

Is the Consent Form appropriate?

Is confidentiality protected?

Is IRB approval available?

Is there any potential harm to VA patients?

What is the potential cost to the VA if any? Is it reimbursable?

What are the scientific objectives/merit of the study?