

## “THIS IS AN EXCITING, GROUNDBREAKING STUDY THAT WILL ANSWER IMPORTANT QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EFFECTIVE AND ECONOMICAL TREATMENTS FOR PATIENTS WITH RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS.”

David Daikh, M.D., Ph.D.  
University of California-San Francisco

countries. In addition to the 10 sites in the RAIN network, Dr. O'Dell recruited 15 Veterans Affairs Medical Centers and 10 Canadian Rheumatology Research Consortium (CRRC) sites.

One of those sites, the San Francisco VA Medical Center, is slated to enroll 20 patients, said David Daikh, M.D., Ph.D.,

chief of rheumatology at the VA center, and associate professor of medicine at the University of California-San Francisco.

“This is an exciting, groundbreaking study that will answer important questions about the effective and economical treatments for patients with rheumatoid arthritis. As we gain more understanding

about the disease and more therapies are developed, we can begin to turn our attention to the next big frontier of targeting therapeutics. That's where the genetic data will be helpful,” he said.

The VA and CRRC now spend more than \$50 million every year on these expensive therapies and are very interested in the results of this study, Dr. O'Dell said.

“I think clinicians around the world will use this information to make better judgments for their patients who have rheumatoid arthritis,” he said. 📺

## Rheumatoid arthritis registry fills important niche by CHUCK BROWN

A registry created by Nebraska researchers and containing information about military veterans with rheumatoid arthritis may offer important insights into male rheumatoid arthritis sufferers.

“The veterans registry allows researchers to examine specific medical and biological information about hundreds of male rheumatoid arthritis sufferers to see what genetic and environmental factors may have played a role in the patients' disease,” said Ted Mikuls, M.D., an associate professor of rheumatology at UNMC who oversees the registry.

Rheumatoid arthritis often affects women between 20 and 50 years of age. Men are usually affected later in life.

“While fewer males may suffer from rheumatoid arthritis, they still compose a significant portion of the population with the disease,” said Dr. Mikuls, who also serves as a rheumatologist with the VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System. “Because the veteran population is so overwhelmingly male, we are in a special position to gather information about men suffering from the disease.”

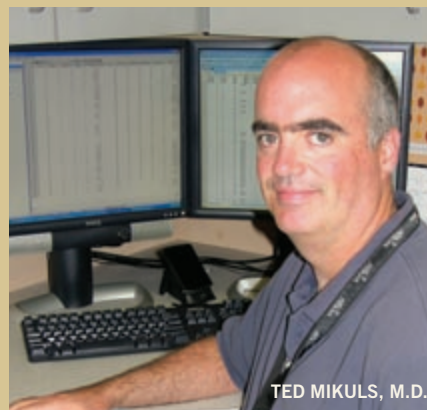
Males account for more than 90 percent of the roughly 900 veterans with information in the Veterans Affairs Rheumatoid Arthritis registry (VARA) – making it perhaps the nation's top source of information about male rheumatoid arthritis sufferers, Dr. Mikuls said.

Dr. Mikuls and Amy Canella, M.D., an assistant professor of rheumatology at UNMC who also works at the Omaha VA, started VARA in 2002.

VA medical centers in Omaha, Denver, Dallas, Washington, D.C., and Salt Lake City contribute information to the database. More centers are expected to join the registry.

Leading rheumatoid arthritis scientists from around the nation, including Peter Gregersen, M.D., of The Feinstein Institute for Medical Research in Manhasset, N.Y., and James O'Dell, M.D., chief of UNMC's rheumatology and immunology section, have expressed interest in the data collected in VARA.

“You don't usually find such a well-defined cohort,” said Dr. Gregersen, who has led the world's largest effort to identify the genes involved in rheumatoid arthritis.



Dr. Gregersen has mined hundreds of millions of genotypes from VARA that he plans to use in his research.

Being able to look at such a specified group of rheumatoid arthritis sufferers may offer insight into how genetic and environmental factors play into the cause of rheumatoid arthritis, he said.

VARA is a truly unique and powerful resource thanks to the combination of a well defined clinical cohort with radiographic data, serological studies, DNA information and banked biological material, Dr. O'Dell said.

“VARA is certain to teach us much about rheumatoid arthritis for years to come,” he said.