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News Release

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Atlanta VA Researchers, Drs. Machele Pardue and April Maa, were selected to participate in the 2nd Annual “VA Research Day on the Hill” on June 20th in Washington DC. These distinguished investigators showcased their innovations in sensory research to Congressional members and their staff. This event, sponsored by the VA Office of Research & Development, recognizes and celebrates research innovations that have led to advances in Veterans’ care and furthered the nation’s understanding of medical research.

Dr. Machele Pardue showcased a novel screening method/tool to detect early-stage diabetic retinopathy. Results from pre-clinical studies, which were funded by the VA, showed that delays in retinal function can detect diabetic retinopathy earlier than current clinical criteria. This screening method/tool can be further developed for use in primary care clinics to permit earlier identification and treatment of diabetic retinopathy. Investigators hope this approach will prevent progression of diabetic retinopathy and minimize vision loss.

Dr. April Maa highlighted the translational research arising from her clinical program, Technology-based Eye Care Services (TECS). TECS prevents blindness in Veterans and reduces health care disparities by improving eye care access. The program uses telehealth technology and generates several image sets a day that can be time consuming for eye providers to interpret. Dr. Maa’s research in collaboration with Google takes images from the TECS program and uses them to train and develop a computer algorithm to help interpret these images with the goal to one day have automated computer assisted reading of images. The goal of this research is to provide more accuracy and standardization for reads, along with immediate triage information in an image-driven telehealth program. “I feel honored to be here,” Maa said. “I like to be able to show the good side of VA and highlight all of the research that VA does. This is a great opportunity for me to showcase translational research, which is taking something from science and applying it to the real world.”

Additional information about the event can be found on
<https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/62020/scientists-display-medical-innovations-va-research-day-nations-capital/>



Dr. April Maa



Senators and staff attending



Dr. Machel Pardue