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News Release

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Atlanta VA Medical Center Investigator awarded two grants totaling \$1.3 million to help improve memory for older Veterans

Veterans who experience memory loss are already benefitting from research being conducted at the Atlanta VA. Now, VA researchers are pushing forward, with newly awarded grants, to pair their already successful techniques with new innovations to continue memory improvements in Veterans and make them last over longer periods of time.

In the highly competitive field of research, the Atlanta VA Medical Center's rehabilitation researchers are at the top of their game and are successful in attaining funding even though research dollars are tighter than ever. Dr. Benjamin Hampstead is a prime example and is eager to continue his already successful research in improving memory loss. He's about to take it one step forward in his newly funded research projects.

In previous research studies, Dr. Hampstead used focused training and saw significant memory improvements not only in healthy older adults, but also older adults in the early stage of Alzheimer's disease known as mild cognitive impairment (MCI). He was able to show that this training restored activity in parts of the brain that are usually affected by the disease. You may remember seeing Dr. Hampstead discuss these findings on a local Fox 5 news story called "Boosting your Memory" that aired last year.

In his newly funded research projects with the Atlanta VA's Center for Visual and Neurocognitive Rehabilitation, Dr. Hampstead is now combining memory rehabilitation techniques with electrical brain stimulation to help facilitate and retain these improvements over time. The projects focus on common complaints of remembering faces and names, where objects have been placed, and how to travel from one location to another – tasks that are challenging for older adults and even more so for those in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease.

Dr. Hampstead is very enthusiastic about the future applications of his research. "The results of these studies may ultimately provide an additional treatment option for the memory problems experienced by these growing populations," said Hampstead. "We want to maximize what these patients can learn and remember and to improve the quality of life for them and their families."

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