

The CVNR names new Executive Director and Associate Executive Director!



Dr. Joe Nocera, Executive Director (left) and Dr. Walter Royal III, Associate Executive Director (right).

We are excited to announce that Joe Nocera, PhD has been selected to serve as the Executive Director of the Center for Visual and Neurocognitive Rehabilitation (CVNR). Dr. Nocera came to the CVNR early in his career as a Career Development 2 awardee and held a dual appointment in the Department of Neurology at Emory University School of Medicine. Over the last 10 years Dr. Nocera held leadership positions within the CVNR and Emory. His primary role as Executive Director is leading the strategic direction and growth of the

CVNR. Dr. Nocera states that “as a Center, we must continue to show our worth to Veterans, which we all are striving to do every day by doing impactful scientific research within visual and neurocognitive rehabilitation.” He is grateful for the opportunity to serve and lead this charge.

One of the first activities Dr. Nocera led as Executive Director was the recent CVNR strategic planning meeting.

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The meeting fostered valuable discussion from research investigators on successes over the years and opportunities for growth. From Dr. Nocera's perspective, some of these exciting opportunities include expansion of areas that are already strengths within the Center, such as PTSD and traumatic brain injury. He also hopes to expand biomarker research with CVNR's newest investigator, Dr. Kevin Wang, and the Molecular Biology Core led by Dr. Jeff Boatright. Additionally, Dr. Nocera is committed to supporting the mentoring and training opportunities available within the CVNR and academic affiliates, in hopes of increasing the number of Career Development Awardees, which will support a new generation of scientists committed to improving Veteran health and quality of life.

We are also pleased to announce that Walter Royal, MD, has been selected to serve as the Associate Executive Director of the CVNR. Dr. Royal attributes his call to serve as CVNR Associate Executive Director to his extensive background studying neurocognitive disorders, the Center's dedication to training the next generation of neuroscientists, and the opportunity to collaborate with other CVNR scientists to achieve the Center's core mission.

Dr. Royal's research includes biomarker discovery and leveraging opportunities to apply state-of-the-art imaging and bioinformatic approaches to his work. As Department Chair of Neurobiology and Director of the Neuroscience Institute at Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM), Dr. Royal has a deep commitment to linking research and training opportunities between MSM and the CVNR and VA. In 2023, Dr. Royal worked with the leaders in the VA Research Office and at MSM to organize an annual joint VA-MSM Research Symposium. The 2024 annual symposium will provide opportunities for sharing research ideas and for forging collaborations between CVNR and MSM investigators. Dr. Royal's drive to create new opportunities is inspired in part by the quote "Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." -Ralph Waldo Emerson. Dr. Royal looks forward to working with the CVNR leadership team and research staff on strategic planning and supervision, while providing his clinical and biomedical research expertise and perspectives to assist in the translation of projects from lab bench to patient bedside.



Atlanta VA Health Care System (151R)
1670 Clairmont Road
Decatur, GA 30033

Mission: To develop novel, clinically-relevant rehabilitative approaches based on scientific discoveries that improve the health and quality of life of Veterans with visual or neurocognitive deficits.