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Implementation Research in the VA Healthcare System: HSRD and Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI)

David Atkins, MD, MPH
Director, QUERI
Dept. Veterans Affairs



Caveat

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- VA research is an INTRAMURAL program
- Principal investigators must have at least 5/8ths VA appointment*
- Other university-affiliated investigators often participate on VA projects
- NIH and AHRQ have funded projects that include VA as a research setting

VA Health Care Context

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- **\$ 35 Billion Budget**
- **21 Regional Networks**
- **153 Medical Centers**
- **724 Community Based Clinics**
- **5 million patients**
- **200,000 employees**

Implementation Research in VHA



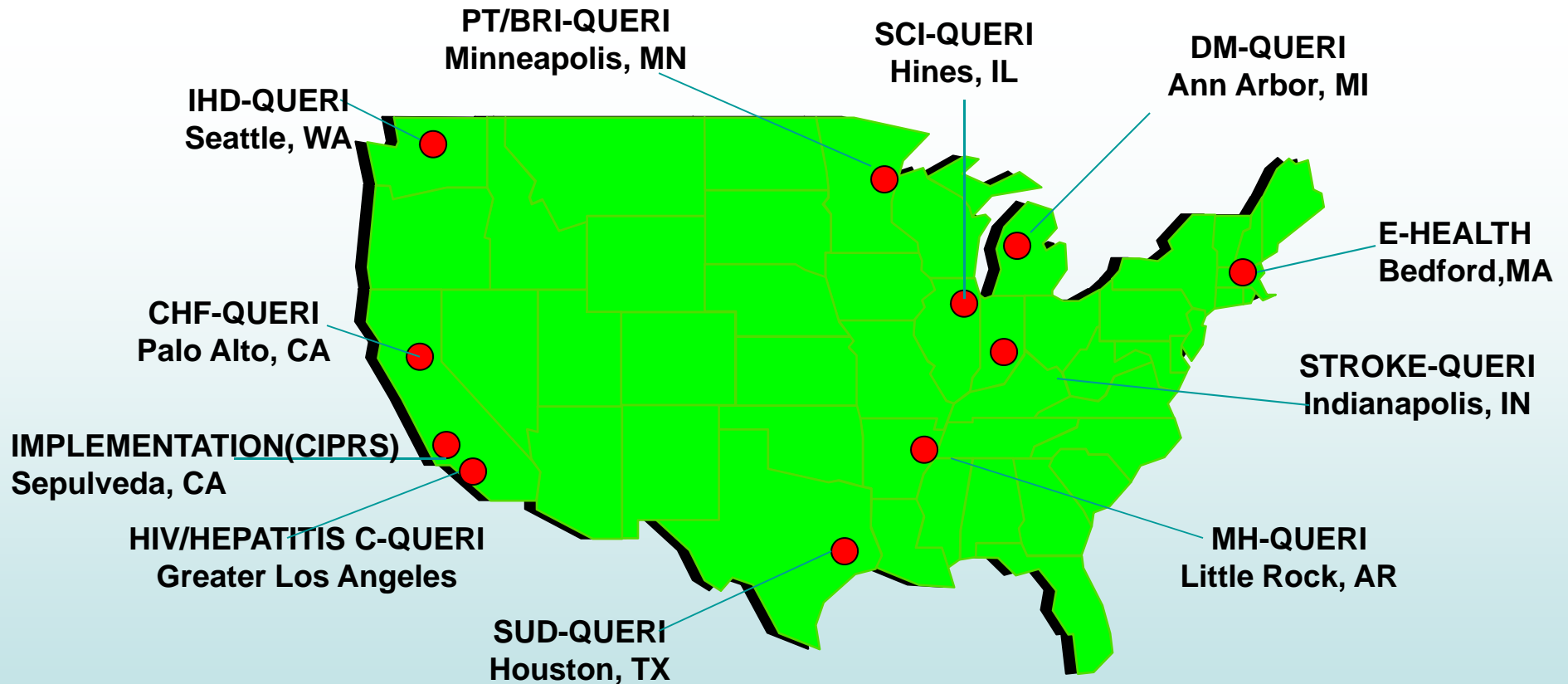
- Health Services Research and Development
 - Health systems, systems engineering
 - \$97 million (from research appropriation)
- QUERI Program
 - Focused on implementation in 9 priority areas
 - \$18 million (from medical care funds)
- Investigator-initiated research, Service-directed research, Career Development Awards

QUERI Coordinating Centers

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● QUERI Centers

QUERI Funding

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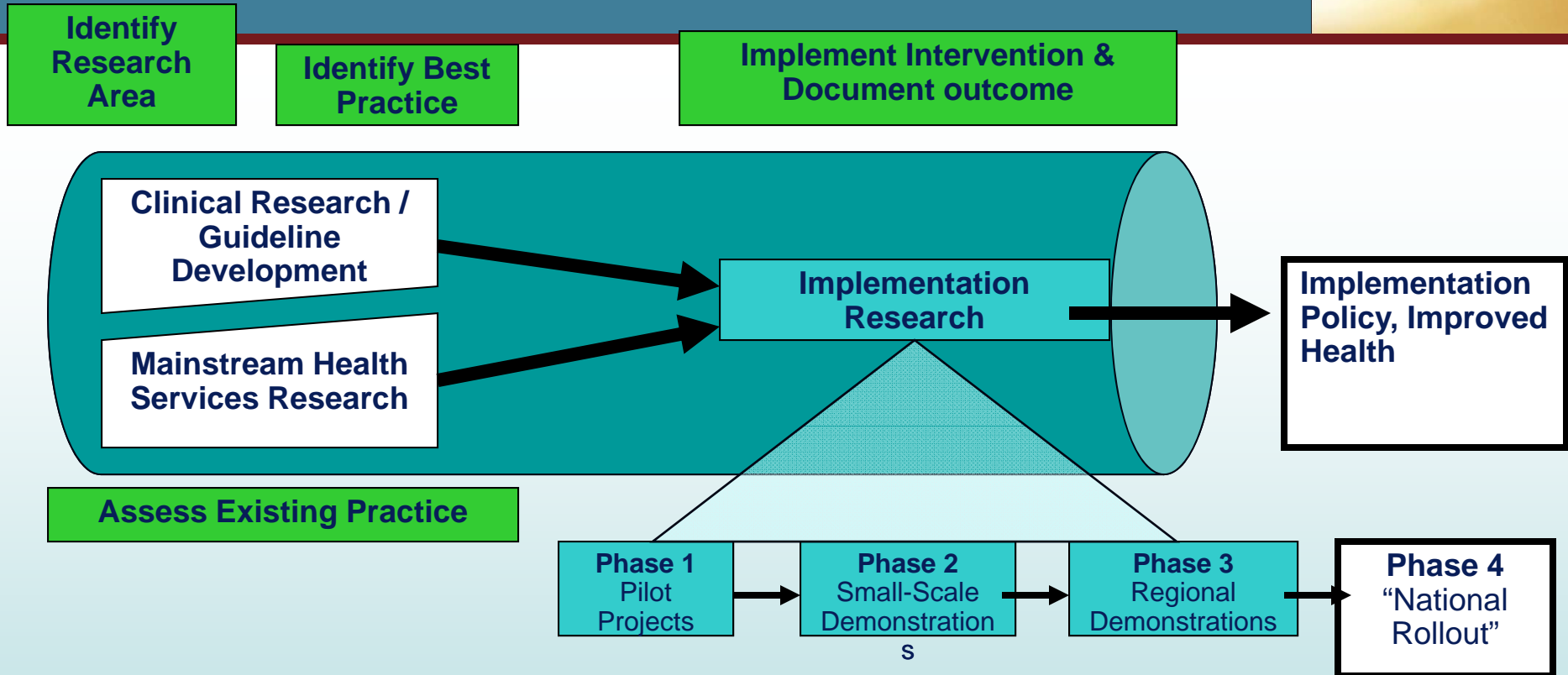
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- Infrastructure support to QUERI Centers
 - Supports strategic planning, partnership activities, local projects, analytic support
- Rapid response projects (1 year, \$100,000)
 - Formative evaluations, assessment of barriers, feasibility testing
- Service-directed projects (3 years, \$1 million)

Implementation Projects

- **Single-site demonstration**
 - Study feasibility, understand barriers,
- **Small scale multi-site implementation**
 - More formal test of effectiveness, refine model
- **“Hybrid” studies**
 - Effectiveness plus implementation endpoints
- **Regional roll-out (multi- VISN)**
 - Test large-scale adoption, refine support
 - Stakeholder involvement > Researchers

QUERI's Research/Implementation Pipeline



Stumbles Along the Way

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- Studies don't begin with questions that are most important to the healthcare system
- Questions adapted to fit favorite theory rather than the other way around
- Study design drives the questions rather than question driving the design
- Theory “tacked on” rather than integral to project

Lessons from Implementation

- Integrated systems like VA have advantages in translating evidence
 - But similar challenges aligning research with needs of health system operations
- Translation research vs. Participatory Research
 - Effective research-practice partnerships require time, effort, flexibility, and mutual understanding
- Research needs to be nimble to be able to learn from natural experiments

Translation Gap

