



May 4, 2021

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Chairwoman
Defense Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Ranking Member
Defense Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jon Tester
Chairman
Defense Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Defense Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairs McCollum and Tester, and Ranking Members Calvert and Shelby:

Our organizations respectfully request an appropriation of \$12 million for Military Dental Research in the FY 2022 Defense Appropriations bill within the Navy Research, Development, Test and Evaluation budget line (**R-1: line 131 PE: 0604771N**). This amount is \$2 million above the FY 2021 enacted funding level. The additional funding would help resume pre-pandemic activities and advance research to address head and facial injuries suffered by service members in the field.

Military Dental Research (MDR) focuses on reconstructing and restoring function of craniofacial (face and skull) tissues and structures. This program is unique and not duplicated by any other federal dental program. In fact, it is the only program focused on head and facial trauma and oral disease. MDR is conducted at the Joint Center of Excellence for Battlefield Health and Trauma at Fort Sam Houston – San Antonio Military Medical Center. Military dental researchers collaborate with scientists at the nation's best universities and other dental researchers to find solutions.

Over 42% of injured service members have had wounds to the head and face. In the last decade alone, more than 4,000 service members have experienced facial injuries. These injuries cause significant physical and emotional challenges for the service member, often resulting in difficulties breathing, eating and speaking. Military dental researchers are the only investigators conducting research to mitigate the loss of facial tissue function and restoration with high quality bone and skin for these service members.

An important aspect of repairing facial wounds is finding better methods to prevent wound complications and address infections that are drug resistant. This work includes the research and development of prophylactic and drug therapy solutions to deliver acute burn care capabilities at the point of need and manage severe wounds to increase survivability, stabilize injuries and limit scarring and infection when casualty evacuation is delayed or unavailable due to limited resources. Solving this problem would not only benefit wounded soldiers, but would also provide relief to civilians who suffer head or facial injury due to head and facial trauma. Congressional support would enable military dental researchers to resume their pre-pandemic activities in this area and advance research and development.

Because of Congressional support, dental researchers have found solutions to mitigate dental disease among service members. The development of an anti-plaque chewing gum has proven to significantly reduce bacteria that cause oral disease. Phase 2 of the clinical trials has proven to be safe and efficacious in reducing plaque buildup during the absence of oral hygiene for soldiers in the field. We're pleased to finally see this product advance to the final phase of development with a commercial entity.

Our organizations strongly believe that increased funding for the MDR program is worthy and justifiable, even in today's difficult budgetary environment. The program has a direct and lasting impact on saving lives and improving the quality of life for our military personnel.

Sincerely,

American Dental Association
American Association for Dental Research