



April 9, 2019

The Honorable Pete Visclosky
Chairman
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

Dear Chairman Visclosky and Ranking Member Calvert:

Our organizations respectfully request an appropriation of \$10 million for Military Dental Research in the Navy Research, Development, Test and Evaluation budget line (R-1: line 131 PE: 0604771N) in the FY 2020 defense appropriations account. This is the same amount as current funding.

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. In FY 2019, this account, received a \$4 million increase, its first increase in four years. The additional funding helped to expand and accelerate research to address facial burns and injuries in the field.

Over 42% of injured service members have had wounds to the head and face. In the last decade alone, over 4,000 service members 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 address infections that are drug resistant. Solving this problem would not only benefit wounded soldiers, but would also have a tremendous impact on all American citizens. Each year, at least 2 million people become infected with antibiotic resistant bacteria and at least 23,000 people die as a direct result of these infections.

A majority of entering military members have dental disease that can advance to a state that results in preventing active duty personnel from being able to carry out their duties. Previously, Congress provided research funding to develop an anti-plaque chewing gum that has proven to significantly reduce bacteria that causes oral disease. This research continues to advance as phase 2 of the clinical trials have proven to be safe and efficacious in reducing plaque buildup during the absence of oral hygiene for soldiers in field. The gum is in the process of advancing to the next phase of development.

MDR research is conducted at the Joint Center of Excellence for Battlefield Health and Trauma (BHT) at Fort Sam Houston – San Antonio Military Medical Center. Dental Researchers there collaborate with scientists at the nation's best universities and other military dental researchers to find solutions. Because of Congressional funding, the results of their work will not only aid wounded warriors but also civilians who suffer head or face injury due to trauma, burns or surgery.

Our organizations strongly believe that the funding for the MDR program is worthy and justifiable, even in today's difficult budgetary environment, since 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