

Press Release

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:
Michiko Riley
Public Affairs Office (310) 268-3340

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VA Los Angeles Researcher Receives Department's Highest Award

LOS ANGELES - VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System (VAGLAHS) senior research scientist, Dr. Jerome Siegel, receives the William S. Middleton Award; VA's most prestigious award in Biomedical Laboratory Research and Development. Dr. Siegel accepts the award on May 4 at the VA National Research Week Forum in Washington, DC.

"This is the highest award for Biomedical/Clinical Research in the VA and GLA is excited to celebrate this honor with Dr. Siegel," said Ms. Donna Beiter, Director, VAGLAHS. "GLA has one of the finest Research Programs in VA and is dedicated to providing the best healthcare for our Veterans and our talented staff reflects our commitment."

Dr. Jerome Siegel, Chief of Neurobiology Research at VAGLAHS, focused his research on understanding sleep physiology including sleep apnea and narcolepsy. Dr. Siegel's group, in parallel with a team from Stanford, discovered the cause of human narcolepsy, a loss of brain cells containing the peptide hypocretin. Dr Siegel's group also discovered that patients with Parkinson's disease have reduced levels of the peptide. Dr. Siegel's group is currently investigating the operation of this system at the neuronal level to better understand its role in health and disease.

"We'll continue working on the system and trying to understand it in a variety of ways," said Siegel. "We're making a positive impact on the field, which will help Veterans who may have sleep problems, insomnia or depression."

Siegel has conducted all his research at VAGLAHS where he began as a Research Associate in 1976 after completing his postdoctoral work at the University of California, Los Angeles. Four years later, he became a Clinical Investigator, then in 1981 was appointed Senior Research Career Scientist. Siegel is now Chief of Neurobiology Research at VAGLAHS. He is also professor of Psychiatry at UCLA.

As part of his Middleton award, Dr. Siegel receives a \$5,000 cash award and an inscribed plaque commemorating his achievements. Siegel also receives \$50,000 per year for 3 years in additional research support. To honor the recipient, VA Biomedical Laboratory Research and Development publishes the award announcement in a scientific journal related to the Dr. Siegel's field of research. GLA will also receive an inscribed plaque from the VA honoring Dr. Jerome Siegel.

"The Middleton award is as major as it gets," said Dr. Dean Norman, Chief of Staff VAGLAHS. "This is quite an achievement not only for Dr. Siegel but for Veterans who will benefit from his extensive research."

"This is such an honor," said Dr. Siegel. "To be nominated by this VA and then chosen from the group of talented scientists is great. The environment at the VA is quite good and supportive."

About the VAGLAHS

VAGLAHS is the largest, most complex healthcare system within the Department of Veterans Affairs. It is one component of the [VA Desert Pacific Healthcare Network \(VISN22\)](#) offering services to veterans residing in Southern California and Southern Nevada. GLA consists of three ambulatory care centers, a tertiary care facility and 10 community based outpatient clinics. GLA serves veterans residing throughout five counties: Los Angeles, Ventura, Kern, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo. There are 1.4 million veterans in the GLA service area.

About the William S. Middleton Award

The William S. Middleton Award was established in 1960, to honor William S. Middleton, M.D., distinguished educator, physician-scientist, and Department of Veterans Affairs Chief Medical Director from 1955 to 1963. One of his most significant contributions is the development of the VA research program; he was instrumental in initiating and stimulating VA medical research. By the time he retired in 1963, over 7,500 research projects, including VA cooperative studies had been undertaken by VA because of his interest and initiative.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the VAGLAHS public affairs office at (310) 268-3340.

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