

**STATEMENT OF THE SOCIETY FOR INVESTIGATIVE DERMATOLOGY**  
**ON**  
**FISCAL YEAR 2008 APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE**  
**VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL AND PROSTHETIC RESEARCH PROGRAM**  
**BEFORE THE**  
**HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY CONSTRUCTION,**  
**VETERANS AFFAIRS AND RELATED AGENCIES**  
**PRESENTED BY**  
**AMY PALLER, MD**  
**PRESIDENT-ELECT, THE SOCIETY FOR INVESTIGATIVE DERMATOLOGY**

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**MARCH 21<sup>ST</sup>, 2007, 2:00 PM**

Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Subcommittee — I am very grateful for this opportunity to testify today in support of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)'s Medical and Prosthetic Research Program. I am Dr. Amy Paller, Professor and Chair of Dermatology, Northwestern University School of Medicine. I also serve as President-Elect of the Society for Investigative Dermatology (SID), and I am here before you today on their behalf.

### Background

The SID has over 2000 members worldwide who are dedicated to the advancement and promotion of the science relevant to skin health and disease through education, advocacy and the scholarly exchange of scientific information. Much of the research conducted by our members addresses the needs of our veterans, and is funded by the VA Medical and Prosthetic Research Program and performed at VA research facilities.

### Burden of Skin Diseases

In 2005, along with the American Academy of Dermatology Association (AADA), the SID released the most comprehensive report to date on the prevalence, economic burden and quality of life implications of the 21 most common skin diseases in the U.S. The economic burden of this sampling of skin diseases amounts to nearly \$39 billion.

Our veteran population is particularly susceptible to certain skin diseases. Rates of skin cancer and other skin diseases are significantly higher for veterans than for the U.S. population as a whole. A number of factors contribute to the disproportionate rate of skin disease in the veteran population.

While on active duty, soldiers may be subject to extreme temperatures, extensive sun exposure, unsanitary living conditions, insect bites, poor nutrition, combat wounds, chemical agents and many other challenges known to contribute to skin disease. Wound treatment is particularly of concern to both soldiers and veterans, and can cause \$12 billion in economic burden each year. Add to these factors the delay in diagnosis and the lack of therapeutics in the field, and the result is often severe skin disease. In the current conflict in Iraq, as in previous wars, 10-15% of evacuations from the combat theatre are due to skin disease. Once manifested in war, these problems can become life-long service-connected medical problems.

Basic research examining the skin's structure and barrier function, and studies examining genetic and immunological disorders that disrupt the skin's barrier function have been, and will continue to be, important. This research helps to expand our understanding of strategies to help prevent skin disease, and to produce more rapid healing. The VA Medical and Prosthetic Research Program supports a vigorous scientific effort to study and reduce the suffering associated with all of these service-related skin diseases.

### Meeting the Need

Recent articles in *Stars and Stripes*, a Department of Defense-authorized daily newspaper distributed overseas for the U.S. military community, document the frustration of wounded veterans in seeking better treatments for UV exposure, parasitic infections, amputated limbs and

wound treatment. As an example, the only treatment for cutaneous leishmaniasis (a disease that is caused by a parasite that is transmitted through the bite of a sand fly) is 10 to 20 days of intravenous Pentostam drips. Pentostam drips produce a host of uncomfortable side effects and require a stay in one of the only two hospitals licensed to administer it: Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. or Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas. Researchers recently estimated that cutaneous leishmaniasis has cost U.S. taxpayers approximately \$40 million, including the costs of Pentostam treatments, missed work and evacuations.

Steady support of skin research through the VA over time builds a base of researchers who can find solutions that will alleviate this chronic need. However, skin research does not benefit skin disease alone. Skin serves as an excellent, accessible interdisciplinary model for disease research and is thus a means by which research dollars have their greatest impact.

Given this array of facts, it is clear that additional funding for skin disease research is needed to find preventive measures, produce improved treatments and offer our troops improved long-term health.

#### Recommendations for the VA Medical and Prosthetic Research Program

Mr. Chairman, your support for the VA Medical and Prosthetic Research Program is deeply appreciated. In spite of lukewarm support from the Administration for this critical, patient-focused research, we urge continued growth for this program so that it can address the intense needs in this area. The SID is pleased to join the Friends of VA Medical Research (FOVA) in requesting a Fiscal Year 2008 (FY08) appropriations level of \$480 million for the VA Medical and Prosthetic Research Program.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present the views of the SID. I will be pleased to answer any questions that you may have.

**Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations  
Subcommittee**

**Witness Disclosure Form**

Clause 2(g) of rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives requires witnesses to disclose to the Committee the following information.

<p>Your Name, Business Address, and Telephone Number:</p> <p>Amy Paller, MD Professor and Chair, Dermatology; Professor of Pediatrics Northwestern University's Feinberg Medical School 676 N St Clair St, Suite 1600 Chicago, IL 60611-2997</p>
<p>1. On whose behalf are you testifying? Society for Investigative Dermatology</p>
<p><b>If you are testifying on behalf of yourself or on behalf of an institution <u>other</u> than a federal agency, or a state, local or tribal government, please proceed to question #2. Otherwise, please sign and return form.</b></p>
<p>2. Have you or any entity you represent received any Federal grants Yes No or contracts (including any subgrants or subcontracts) since October 1, 2004? Yes</p>
<p>3. If your response to question #2 is "Yes", please list the amount and source (by agency and program) of each grant or contract, and indicate whether the recipient of such grant or contract was you or the entity you represent.</p> <p>National Institutes of Health (National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases) R01 award. Recipient: Amy Paller, M.D.. Approximately \$200,000 per year for 5 years through August, 2008.</p> <p>National Institutes of Health (National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases) R13 award. Recipient: Society for Investigative Dermatology. \$12,000 per year through 2006. Renewed in 2007 for \$15,000 through 2011.</p>

*Amy Paller, M.D.*

Signature:

Date: March 9, 2007

Dr. Amy Paller is Professor and Walter J. Hamlin Chair of Dermatology and Professor of Pediatrics at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine. She received her undergraduate and graduate degrees from Brown University and her medical degree from Stanford University. Dr. Paller completed residency training in Pediatrics at the Children's Memorial Hospital of Northwestern University and her training in Dermatology at the Department of Dermatology at Northwestern University. Her research fellowship training was performed at the University of North Carolina.

Dr. Paller was the head of the Division of Dermatology at Children's Memorial Hospital before assuming the position of chair of the Department of Dermatology at Northwestern University in 2004. She has served on the Board of Directors of the American Academy of Dermatology, the Society for Investigative Dermatology, the Society for Pediatric Dermatology, and the Women's Dermatologic Society. She recently completed a term as President of the Society for Pediatric Dermatology, is currently President-Elect of the Society for Investigative Dermatology, and is a Director of the American Board of Dermatology. An author of more than 300 publications, Dr. Paller is an NIH-funded investigator who recently served on the NIH Board of Scientific Counselors (NIAMS). Her clinical interests focus on genetic disorders of the skin and cutaneous immunologic disorders. Her laboratory largely studies the role of gangliosides in normal and neoplastic keratinocytes.

She is co-editor of several leading textbooks of dermatology, among them *Fitzpatrick's Dermatology in General Medicine (Ed. 7)*, *Pediatric Dermatology*, and *Hurwitz's Clinical Pediatric Dermatology*. She is an Assistant Editor of the *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology*, Associate Editor of the *Journal of Investigative Dermatology*, and serves on the editorial boards of several other journals. Dr. Paller is on the scientific advisory boards for several major support organizations for patients, among them the National Eczema Association for Science and Education, the National Psoriasis Foundation, and the Foundation for Ichthyosis and Related Skin Types.