



**M** | RESEARCH

# VETERANS' HEALTH RESEARCH AT RISK

Dr. Nadejda "Nadia" Bozadjieva Kramer's appointment with the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System was terminated in February due to a sudden federal hiring freeze and delays in renewing contracts. As a result, her vital research aimed at improving veterans' health was brought to a halt.

Also an assistant professor in the University of Michigan's Department of Surgery, Dr. Kramer has dedicated her career to studying obesity and metabolic dysfunction, conditions that disproportionately affect veterans and increase their risk of diabetes, heart disease and other chronic illnesses. Her work has included preclinical research modeling human disease and tracking veterans and their health outcomes after bariatric surgery – research activities that are currently on hold.

And although she earned a VA Career Development Award that runs through 2027, Dr. Kramer's ability to continue her research has been interrupted due to administrative delays related to her VA appointment.

"I am proud to be a VA-funded investigator, and I remain committed to addressing the obesity and metabolic dysfunction

crisis affecting our Veterans," Kramer said. "My separation from the VA has not only halted my research but also taken away a crucial period in my career development as an independent VA investigator".

Dr. Kramer's separation from the VA is part of a broader set of administrative challenges affecting more than 200 U-M faculty with VA appointments. These researchers are tackling studies on PTSD, substance use disorders, heart failure, Parkinson's disease and other health concerns important to veterans. Without clear human resources guidance to support appointment renewals, groundbreaking, life-saving research directly impacting veterans is now in jeopardy.

The VA and National Institutes of Health play a crucial role in funding research that benefits veterans and the broader public. While federal hiring freezes and potential cuts to federal funding remain a concern for many, this specific situation is not about a lack of funding – it's about administrative barriers preventing researchers from doing their jobs.

Without immediate action to reinstate researchers like Kramer and streamline VA appointment processes, critical studies on Veterans' health will remain stalled, delaying treatments and potential cures.

"These challenges don't just affect researchers – they affect veterans who rely on medical breakthroughs to improve their health and quality of life," said Kramer.