

GULF WAR NEWSLETTER

INFORMATION FOR VETERANS WHO SERVED IN OPERATIONS DESERT SHIELD
AND DESERT STORM AND THEIR FAMILIES

INDEPENDENT COMMITTEE TO REVIEW INTERGENERATIONAL EFFECTS OF GULF WAR SERVICE



Marines boarding a commercial aircraft to support coalition forces for Operation Desert Shield

For years, Veterans of different military conflicts, including the Gulf War, have had concerns about whether or not health effects related to their military service could be passed on to future generations. To help address these concerns, the Health and Medicine Division (HMD), formerly known as the Institute of Medicine (IOM), of the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, is reviewing research findings on possible intergenerational effects of military deployments, with a focus on Veterans of the first Gulf War. HMD plans to announce findings from the review in 2019.

HMD serves as an independent advisor for VA and other government agencies and organizations. VA is required by law to contract with HMD to review evidence for possible connections between Gulf War Veterans'



illnesses and exposure to environmental agents or preventive medicine during military service.

HMD has assembled a multi-disciplinary, expert committee to review published research on the children of individuals with toxic exposure, including studies on the health of populations and research conducted in controlled laboratory settings. The committee will identify areas that need further scientific

continued on page 2

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Committee Review
- 3 Fibromyalgia
- 3 Research Roundup
- 5 Gulf War Registry
- 6 Burn Pit Registry
- 6 Camp Lejeune Presumptives
- WRIISC Introduction
- My HealtheVet

GULF WAR AT A GLANCE

- Desert Shield/Desert Storm (1990-1991) Servicemembers Worldwide: **2,322,000**
- Deployed to Gulf: **694,550**
- U.S. Casualties: **148** killed in action, **467** wounded in combat, **235** other in-theater deaths
- Providing medical support to the military in times of war with more than **3,000** VA employees serving.
- First war to utilize women in non-traditional roles such as truck drivers and helicopter and aircraft pilots.



INDEPENDENT COMMITTEE TO REVIEW INTERGENERATIONAL EFFECTS OF GULF WAR SERVICE

continued from page 1

study. The committee will also determine the methods needed to conduct adequate scientific research on the descendants of individuals with hazardous exposures.

The HMD committee will consider which hazardous exposures are known to cause adverse effects on health, including cancer, reproductive issues, and developmental issues, in Veterans and subsequent generations. The hazards they will look at include, but are not limited to, burning oil wells, pesticides, nerve agents, prophylactic agents, depleted uranium, and vaccines.

In addition, the HMD committee will provide information and advice to VA on:

1. The multigenerational effects of the toxicants in animals
2. The feasibility of conducting a long-term epidemiologic study on the generational health effects
3. Developing a way to monitor and study generational health effects over time, including post-exposure assessments, initial screening of Veterans and their descendants, and the frequency and duration of such screenings
4. The appropriate federal agencies or organizations that would be best suited to coordinate and/or conduct



A U.S. Air Force B-52G Stratofortress aircraft takes off on a mission in support of Operation Desert Storm.

of Veterans and the resources (technological and logistical) needed for this research

the research and screenings on an ongoing basis.

The committee plans to release a report in a book form that will also be available for free online. Although the report will focus on the effects of possible exposures during the Gulf War, the review will be broad enough to be applicable to other conflicts. HMD has produced reports in the past on a variety of issues, including long-term effects of blast exposures, treatment for chronic multisystem illness, and health effects of serving in the Gulf War. Read more about these HMD reports at <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/reports/health-and-medicine-division.asp>. Additionally, VA has asked HMD to continue its series of reviews on Agent Orange and health effects, including the intergenerational effects that may occur due to exposure to herbicides and their contaminants, especially those that might have been transmitted by fathers.





FIBROMYALGIA – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Fibromyalgia is a health condition characterized by unexplained pain throughout the body. Symptoms include:

- At least 3 months of unexplained pain in the muscles, tendons, and other soft tissues
- Points on the neck, shoulders, back, hips, arms, or legs that are tender and hurt with pressure
- Additional health problems such as sleep disturbances, headaches, memory problems, or morning muscle stiffness

Symptoms can be managed:

Researchers and health care providers do not currently know a direct cause or cure for fibromyalgia. However, Veterans can work with their health care team to manage symptoms. Prescription drugs are available to treat fibromyalgia. If you are concerned about symptoms

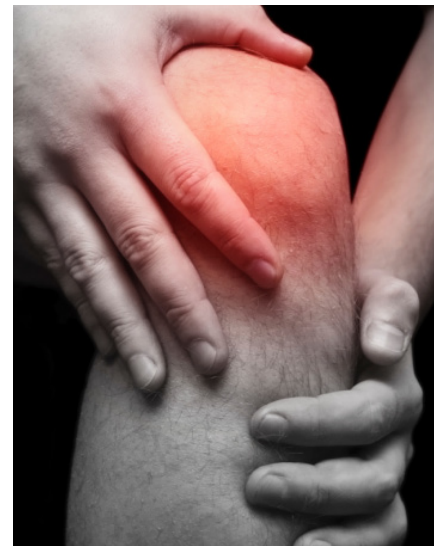
related to fibromyalgia and would like to learn about health care options for Gulf War Veterans, go to <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/benefits/health-care.asp> or call 1-877-222-8387. Also, you can talk to an Environmental Health Coordinator near you about your concerns <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/coordinators.asp>

Fibromyalgia is a presumptive illness for Gulf War Veterans:

VA presumes that some health conditions, including fibromyalgia, were caused by military service. As a presumptive illness, Veterans do not have to prove an association between fibromyalgia and their military service. The condition must be at least 10 percent disabling and have first appeared sometime between active duty in the Southwest Asia theater of military operations and December 31, 2021.

Learn more about presumptive service connection and benefits for Gulf War Veterans at <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/benefits/index.asp> or call 1-800-827-1000.

More information about fibromyalgia is available at <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/fibromyalgia.asp>



RESEARCH ROUNDUP: THE LATEST RESEARCH ON THE HEALTH OF GULF WAR VETS

VA researchers across the country are conducting studies on the health of Gulf War Veterans. Some studies are just beginning and researchers are looking for volunteers.

Timothy Connors, who served in the Persian Gulf twice between 1986 and 1991, participated in a study on Gulf War illness at the War Related Illness and Injury Study Center (WRIISC) in East Orange, New Jersey.

Connors said he saw six primary providers at VA in five years for his health problems, and he was frustrated with his VA experience. "I was getting nowhere with VA. I was on 35 to 40 medications," said Connors. As a part of the study, the researchers reviewed his health and the medications he took. They created a treatment plan for him and shared it with his providers. "It was helpful," said Connors. "I am down to five medications now."

Below is a sample of health studies on Gulf War Veterans that have just started or are currently underway. VA encourages Gulf War Veterans to make a difference in the health and well-being of fellow Veterans, and hopefully their own health, by participating in a research study.

CoQ10 in Gulf War Illness: VA researchers want to know if the antioxidant Coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10) will treat Gulf War illness. In a pilot

continued on page 4



RESEARCH ROUNDUP: THE LATEST RESEARCH ON THE HEALTH OF GULF WAR VETS

continued from page 4

study, researchers found that CoQ10 improved physical function and symptoms in Veterans with Gulf War illness (learn more about the pilot at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25149705>). The current study builds on the pilot. This study is for Veterans with Gulf War illness and will be conducted at the VA Medical Centers in Miami, Boston, the Bronx, and Minneapolis. For more information about this study, go to <https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT02865460>

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) for Sleep, Health Functioning, and Quality of Life in Veterans with Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses:

This is an ongoing clinical study at the WRIISC at the Washington DC VA Medical Center to find out if CAM approaches can improve Gulf War Veterans' illnesses. Participants will be randomly assigned to one of two different consecutive eight-week groups: one group will receive health

education classes that provide resources and promote wellness, and the other group will attend iRest yoga meditation and auricular (ear) acupuncture classes. In order to be eligible for the study, Gulf War Veterans must have been deployed between 1990-1991 and must have two out of three of the following symptoms: fatigue, pain, and/or self-reported cognitive difficulties. To learn more, contact the study team at 1-800-722-8340 or go to <http://www.warrelatedillness.va.gov/warrelatedillness/research/volunteer/dc-wriisc.asp>

Post-Exertional Malaise in Gulf War Illness: Brain, Autonomic and Behavioral Interactions:

Researchers are using brain imaging and ultrasound techniques to examine different aspects of the nervous and immune systems, and how their functions are affected by exercise. This study is for Veterans who deployed to the Gulf War, and Veterans who served, but were not deployed, between 1989 and 1994. Participants will visit either the VA Medical Center in Madison, WI, or East Orange, NJ, for a total of

three visits. Learn more by calling 1-800-248-8005, or visit <http://www.warrelatedillness.va.gov/research/volunteer/nj-wriisc.asp#post-exertional-malaise>

Problem-Solving Treatment for Gulf War Veterans with Gulf War Illness:

This study is for Gulf War Veterans with Gulf War illness. Study participants will be assigned to receive 12 weeks of either problem-solving therapy (a form of cognitive rehabilitation) or health education. Researchers want to understand which treatment better helps Veterans with Gulf War illness with trouble concentrating or thinking clearly. Both treatments will be delivered over the phone, so Veterans across the nation can participate in this study. To learn more, call 1-800-248-8005, or visit <http://www.warrelatedillness.va.gov/research/volunteer/nj-wriisc.asp#wriisc-model-cmi>

Development of Dietary Polyphenol Preparations for Treating Veterans with Gulf War Illness:

This study is for Gulf War Veterans who have symptoms of Gulf War illness. Participants will enroll in a 24-week study to test the effectiveness of daily Concord grape juice consumption in improving fatigue and thinking ability. Participants will make regular bi-weekly visits to the VA Medical Center in East Orange, NJ, to fill out short surveys and restock on grape juice, in addition to three longer sessions occurring at the baseline, week 12, and week 24 of the study. For more information call 1-800-248-8005, or go to <http://www.warrelatedillness.va.gov/research/volunteer/nj-wriisc.asp#grape-juice-study>



Yang Chen, PhD extracts DNA for analysis in a WRIISC study to see whether mitochondria are damaged and/or not properly functioning in Veterans with Gulf War illness.

continued on page 5



WRIISC as a Model of Care for Chronic Multi-Symptom Illness:

All three WRIISC sites are conducting a study to learn how health care providers and Gulf War Veterans think and talk about Gulf War illness. The goal is to better understand the factors that lead to better relationships between Veterans and their providers and how to improve outcomes of care. Researchers are recruiting Gulf War Veterans with Gulf War illness to participate at the WRIISCs within the Veterans Affairs Medical Centers in Palo Alto, CA; Washington, DC; and East Orange, NJ. Interested Veterans can call 1-800-248-8005 or visit <http://www.warrelatedillness.va.gov/research/volunteer/nj-wriisc.asp#wriisc-model-cmi> to learn more.

Gulf War Era Cohort and Biorepository (GWECB):

Researchers have collected information and blood samples from more than 1,270 Veterans who served during the 1990-1991 Gulf War era. Now the team is making the information and the collected blood samples available

to approved researchers who want to study and learn more about the health of Veterans of this era. Study researchers are also conducting group discussions and interviews with Veterans to learn more about what would motivate them to enroll in research projects, what concerns Veterans have, and how research projects can better meet Veterans' needs. Researchers are currently enrolling Veterans from select areas for this study. To learn more, visit www.research.va.gov/programs/csp/585



The WRIISC has many state-of-the-art assessments for Veterans with airborne hazard exposures. One of these methods is complete pulmonary function testing (PFT) which includes assessment of spirometry, lung volume, and lung diffusing capacity.

VA researchers are conducting many more studies on Gulf War Veterans. Learn about more VA research studies that are currently underway, now recruiting participants, or announcing findings:

Office of Research and Development, VA research on Gulf War Veterans <http://www.research.va.gov/topics/gulfwar.cfm>

Epidemiology Research Studies. Scroll to "Gulf War Era Veterans with 1990-1991 service" <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/epidemiology/studies/index.asp>

War Related Illness and Injury Study Center, research on Gulf War Veterans <http://www.warrelatedillness.va.gov/research/research-studies.asp#gulf>

Search "Gulf War" on <https://clinicaltrials.gov/>

GULF WAR REGISTRY HEALTH EXAM

The Gulf War Registry health exam is a free evaluation for Veterans who served in the Gulf during Operations Desert Shield, Desert Storm, Iraqi Freedom, or New Dawn. Veterans can learn about possible health problems related to environmental exposures during military service. Participants receive a comprehensive health exam, including an exposure and medical history, laboratory tests if needed, and a physical exam. Follow-up evaluations are available if a Veteran has a new health concern or a change in their health status.

Are you interested in having a Gulf War Registry health exam? Veterans do not need to be enrolled in VA health care to participate. Contact your local VA Environmental Health Coordinator <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/coordinators.asp> and find out more at <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/benefits/registry-exam.asp>



HOW MANY GULF WAR REGISTRY EXAMS WERE CONDUCTED?

Initial exam: **181,914**

Follow-up exams: **1,472**

Total (initial + follow-up): **183,386**
as of 12/31/2016



JOIN THE AIRBORNE HAZARDS & OPEN BURN PIT REGISTRY, VA'S FASTEST GROWING REGISTRY

The Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry now includes more than 100,000 participants, making it the fastest growing registry ever offered by VA. Between **February 10, 2017**, and the launch of the registry in June 2014, **101,012** Veterans and Servicemembers have joined, including Veterans of the Gulf War who served again in Southwest Asia. An estimated three million Veterans and Servicemembers are eligible to participate in the registry.

The burn pit registry was designed to address Veterans' health concerns about burn pit exposure. Veterans and Servicemembers can voluntarily document their exposures and report their health concerns by filling out a survey online.

Veterans who served in the Southwest Asia theater of operations after August 2, 1990, or in Afghanistan or Djibouti, Africa, after September 11, 2001, can enroll in the burn pit registry at <https://veteran.mobilehealth.va.gov/AHBurnPitRegistry/>. Participants will be asked to complete a questionnaire on where the Veteran has lived; what type of work they have done; and their exposures, health care use, and hobbies.

The benefits of participating in the burn pit registry are:

- Servicemembers can obtain a free health evaluation from a Department of Defense (DoD) provider.



- Veterans can obtain a free health evaluation from a VA provider.
- Veterans can discuss their completed questionnaire with a health care provider to gain better health awareness.
- VA can better understand the long-term health effects of being exposed to burn pits and other airborne hazards.
- Information from the registry can help VA plan for needed services for Veterans.



Additional information about the registry can be found at <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/burnpits/registry.asp>. Similar registries include the Gulf War Registry Health Exam <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/benefits/registry-exam.asp> and the Agent Orange Registry Health Exam <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/benefits/registry-exam.asp>, designed for Vietnam Veterans.

VA ANNOUNCES PRESUMPTIVE CONDITIONS FOR CAMP LEJEUNE VETERANS

VA recently established a presumption of service connection for certain diseases associated with contaminants found in the early 1980's at Camp Lejeune, the Marine Corps Base in Lejeune, NC. Two on-base water supply systems were contaminated with the volatile organic compounds trichloroethylene (TCE), a metal degreaser; perchloroethylene (PCE), a dry cleaning agent; benzene; and vinyl chloride.

Some Gulf War Veterans may have been stationed at Camp Lejeune. To be eligible for a presumptive service connection, Veterans must have served at Camp Lejeune for at least 30 days between August 1, 1953, and December 31, 1987, and later developed one of the following eight conditions:

- Adult leukemia
- Aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes

continued on page 7



VA ANNOUNCES PRESUMPTIVE CONDITIONS FOR CAMP LEJEUNE VETERANS

continued from page 6

- Bladder cancer
- Kidney cancer
- Liver cancer
- Multiple myeloma
- Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- Parkinson's disease

Veterans eligible for presumptive service connection include former Reservists and National Guard members who were discharged on conditions other than dishonorable.

There are several ways for Veterans to seek benefits:

- Apply online using eBenefits. File under one of the presumed Camp Lejeune illnesses in the application. The application should include evidence of service at Camp Lejeune during the required timeframe, and medical evidence showing a diagnosis. <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/homepage>

- Work with an accredited representative or agent. Find one at: <http://www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation/index.asp>

- Go to a VA regional office and get assistance from a VA employee. Find the nearest office at: <http://www.va.gov/directory/guide/division.asp?dnum=3>

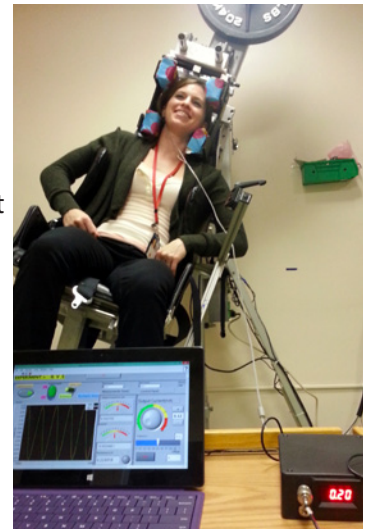
More information is available at <http://www.benefits.va.gov/COMPENSATION/claims-postservice-exposures-camp-lejeune-water.asp> or <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/camp-lejeune/>. These resources also contain information about family member health care reimbursement.

WAR RELATED ILLNESS AND INJURY STUDY CENTER (WRIISC)—HELPING VETERANS LIVE BETTER

The War Related Illness and Injury Study Center (WRIISC), a national VA post-deployment health resource, is dedicated to Veterans' unique post-deployment health concerns, including the health concerns of Gulf War Veterans. The WRIISC develops and provides post-deployment health expertise to Veterans and their health care providers through clinical care, research, education, and risk communication.

To best serve Veterans and better equip their providers, the WRIISC updated its consult management process so that all referred Veterans would receive a thorough medical record review and recommendations for next steps in their care plan. Referred to as an eConsult, when a VA provider submits a referral to the WRIISC for a Veteran, a thorough chart review is conducted by the WRIISC team to determine whether the Veteran's concerns have been thoroughly evaluated by their home VA and primary care provider. This results in personalized recommendations for next steps given directly to a Veteran's provider. These recommendations may also include additional WRIISC clinical services.

WRIISC e-consults impact the lives of referred Veterans individually, but also support referring healthcare providers in their mission to provide better care to all Veterans with similar deployment-related concerns. For more information on how to obtain a WRIISC referral visit the WRIISC website at <http://www.warrelatedillness.va.gov/clinical/index.asp>



WRIISC staff demonstrate how a NASA-designed rotational chair stimulates the vestibular system (which senses movement) to evaluate vestibular function in blast-exposed Servicemembers.

MY HEALTHEVET: VETERAN CARE MADE EASY

My HealtheVet, VA's online personal health record, is a free tool to help all Veterans, including Gulf War Veterans, take charge of their health care. "It's a great tool," said Gulf War Veteran Timothy Connors. Connors uses MyHealtheVet to help him remember the medicines he takes, reorder medicines, and check appointments.

MyHealtheVet allows Veterans to:

Access and manage medical records: Veterans can quickly access and manage their VA medical records online and keep track of test results. Veterans can also record their health history, including allergies, immunization history, medical events, family health history, and military history.

continued on page 8



MY HEALTHVET: VETERAN CARE MADE EASY

continued from page 7

Refill prescriptions and track delivery: My HealtheVet's prescription refill feature allows Veterans to request a refill online and track prescription deliveries. Veterans can also find a history of their VA prescriptions and detailed information on active medications.

Communicate with VA health care providers and view appointments: My HealtheVet's Secure Messaging feature gives Veterans a safe and convenient way to communicate online with their VA health care provider between appointments. Veterans can talk about their health, follow-up care instructions, medications, lab results, and other routine questions. Veterans can also view upcoming VA appointments.

Focus on health: MyHealthevet offers the healtheliving assessment, an online test that estimates a Veteran's health age based on responses about their medical history and health choices. It also provides tips on ways to improve their health. Veterans can also keep a food and activity journal on MyHealtheVet, and store vitals including blood pressure, heart rate, body weight, temperature, and pain level.



Not a My HealtheVet User? Register today at www.myhealth.va.gov

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