

War Related Illness and Injury Study Center (WRIISC)

Meeting of the Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses
March 1 & 2, 2010
Washington, DC

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Overview


- Brief review of National WRIISC program
- Update WRIISC Gulf War research
- Ways WRIISC touches lives of Gulf War Veterans

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Background


- In 2001, the U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs established the WRIISCs to respond to deployment-related health concerns of Veterans returning from conflict
- Concept based on proven translational model
 - GRECCs
- 3 National Locations:
 - East Orange, New Jersey
 - Washington, DC
 - Palo Alto, California (opened 2008)

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WRIISC Model



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What is the WRIISC?

- **Second opinion resource**
 - addressing the post deployment health needs of combat Veterans from past and future conflicts
- **Provides consultative clinical assessments**
 - to Veterans with deployment-related health concerns and illnesses to improve their health-related quality of life
- **Advances knowledge through research and education**

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WRIISC Clinical Collaborations

- Across WRIISCs
- Within Host Facilities
 - Primary Care
 - Mental Health
 - Neurology
 - Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
- Regionally
 - VISN 3, 5, and 21



Palo Alto WRIISC

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WRIISC Research Collaborations





Mount Sinai School of Medicine
New Jersey Medical School
New York University
Stanford University
Johns Hopkins Medical School
Georgetown University
UC Berkeley
Harvard Medical School





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WRIISC Research



- Basic Science Studies
- Physiological Studies
- Neuroimaging Studies
- Behavioral studies
- Clinical Treatment Trials
- Health Services Research

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Overview: Persian Gulf War Studies Undertaken

- Basic Science Studies:
 - Completed Research:
 - Early Life Determinants of Vulnerability to Pyridostigmine Bromide (Weaver, Funding period: 2004-2006)
 - Interactions Between Maternal Care, Stress and Pyridostigmine Bromide (Weaver, Funding period: 2004-2007)
 - Ongoing Research:
 - Avoiding PTSD Relapse through Behavioral Conditioning (Zeitzer)

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Overview: Persian Gulf War Studies Undertaken

- Physiological Studies:
 - Completed Research:
 - Cardiovascular Hyperreactivity and Fatiguing Illness in Gulf War Veterans (Peckerman et al., 2003)
 - Pain sensitivity in Gulf War Veterans with Medically Unexplained Musculoskeletal Pain (Cook et al., 2005)
 - Ongoing Research:
 - Motor Neuron function of Gulf War Veterans with Excessive Fatigue (Li)
 - Autonomic function of Gulf War Veterans with Unexplained Illness (Li)

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Overview: Persian Gulf War Studies Undertaken

- Neuroimaging Studies:
 - Completed Research:
 - Functional Imaging of Pain in Gulf War Veterans with Medically Unexplained Musculoskeletal Pain (Cook, 2005)
 - Ongoing Research:
 - Functional Imaging of Pain in Gulf War Veterans with Medically Unexplained Musculoskeletal Pain (Cook)
 - MRI/PET/CT* brain scanning in Gulf War Veterans – detection of abnormalities and surveillance for irregular patterns (Ashford)

* Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), Positron Emission Tomography (PET), Computerized Tomography (CT)

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Overview: Persian Gulf War Studies Undertaken

- **Clinical Treatment Trials:**
 - **Completed Research:**
 - Telemedicine Treatment for Veterans with Gulf War Illness (Ciccone, 2008)
 - **Ongoing Research:**
 - Pilot Study: Mind/Body Treatment Program for Veterans with Pain, Fatigue, and PTSD (Mahoney, Charvat)

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Overview: Persian Gulf War Studies Undertaken

- **Health Services Research:**
 - **Completed Research:**
 - Effects of PTSD and Symptom-Based Illness on Medical Visitation in a Random Sample of Gulf War Era Veterans (Ciccone, General Hospital Psychiatry, paper under review)
 - Barriers to Treatment for Female Veterans with PTSD (Chandler, data analysis ongoing)
 - **Ongoing Research:**
 - Predictors of Medically Unexplained Symptoms (McAndrew)

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Overview: Persian Gulf War Studies Proposed or Planned

- **Physiological Studies:**
 - Consortium study (includes TRI-WRIISC and academic institutions): Physiological Causes of Sleep Disturbance in Persian Gulf War Veterans and Implications for Treatment (Serrador proposal to be submitted for consideration to Department of Defense, Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs, DoD CDMRP)
- **Neuroimaging Studies:**
 - The Effectiveness of Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation – rTMS* – for Chronic Pain in Veterans with Gulf War Illnesses (Ashford)

* Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation

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Overview: Persian Gulf War Studies Proposed or Planned

- **Clinical Treatment Trials:**
 - Evaluating the Implementation of a Cognitive Rehabilitation Program for Gulf War Veterans (Hodgkiss, proposal submitted to VA CSR&D*)
 - Complimentary and Alternative Medicine: Treatment Feasibility Study for Sleep Disturbances in Gulf War Veterans (Rusiewicz, proposal to be submitted to VA HSR&D**)
 - Complementary and Alternative Medicine: Mind/Body Treatment Program for Veterans with Pain, Fatigue, and PTSD (Mahoney, Charvat, proposal to be submitted to VA HSR&D**)

* VA Clinical Sciences Research and Development Service (CSR&D)

** VA Health Service Research and Development Service (HSR&D)

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WRIISC Research Statistics

- **Current WRIISC studies**
 - **Related to Persian Gulf War Veterans:**
 - Ongoing: 7 studies
 - Proposed or planned: 5 studies
 - **Related to other era Veterans:**
 - Ongoing: 5 studies
 - Proposed or planned: 3 studies
- **Total WRIISC research publications specific to Persian Gulf War Veterans:**
 - More than 45 papers

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Research Funding

- **WRIISC grants to WRIISC researchers**
- **VA**
 - CSR&D, HSR&D
- **DoD/CDMRP**
 - Gulf War Panel, Traumatic Brain Injury Panel
- **National Institutes of Health**
 - The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS)
 - National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS)

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WRIISC Research Short Term Goals

- Utilize resources at:
 - DC WRIISC to accelerate CAM studies
 - DC and Palo Alto to do brain imaging studies
 - Palo Alto WRIISC to undertake cutting edge genetic studies
 - NJ WRIISC to undertake cardiovascular and vestibular studies

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Take Home Point

- Important factors for a successful research strategy:
 - Creation and implementation of calls for proposal associated with appropriate funding levels ✓
 - Research community willing and able to apply for and undertake studies ✓
 - Recruitment levels that will ensure feasibility and internal validity of studies undertaken

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Other ways WRIISC touches lives of Gulf War Veterans

- Comprehensive Clinical Evaluation
- Exposure Evaluation
- Education/Outreach
- Health Management


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WRIISC Clinical Services

- “Comprehensive standardized medical evaluations of medically unexplained symptoms for Veterans from any era or conflict.”
 - Medical Evaluation and Labs
 - Exposure Evaluation
 - Psychological and Neuropsychological Screen
 - Social Work Evaluation
 - Educational Session
 - Debriefing by assessment team providing treatment recommendations and “roadmap” for healthcare and services

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Clinical Services cont...



- Comprehensive reviews of military exposures from Veterans from any era or conflict
 - More than 420 Persian Gulf Veterans seen to date
 - More than 750 other era vets seen to date
- Group and individual Yoga and acupuncture treatments
 - More than 316 Persian Gulf Veterans served to date
 - More than 1200 other era vets served to date

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The WRIISC: Your Experts in Post-Deployment Health

The War Related Illness and Injury Study Center (WRIISC) is a Department of Veterans Affairs program devoted to your deployment-related and post-deployment health care needs. We identify and provide expertise for Veterans and their health care providers through clinical evaluation, research, education, and risk communication.

Services include:

- Comprehensive medical and health evaluations
- Individualized treatment plans
- Individualized health care recommendations
- Research and education
- Risk communication

By a multi-disciplinary team of health care providers, the goal of the comprehensive evaluation is to provide you with an individualized treatment plan – or – modify the program if your care needs change. These comprehensive evaluations are unique in the context of the Department of Defense (DoD) health care system.

Call us today. We'll help you!

For more information call our National Helpline Program Coordinator at:

1-202-461-1013

or visit our website:

www.wriisc.gov


at one of our three locations:

War Related Illness and Injury Study Center
 Department of Veterans Affairs
 Health Services Center
 122 Research Ave.
 Washington, DC 20316-5123
1-800-248-8005
 www.wriisc.gov

War Related Illness and Injury Study Center
 16A VA Medical Center
 2025 Avenue A
 Honolulu, HI 96841
1-888-482-4374
 www.wriisc.gov

War Related Illness and Injury Study Center
 VA Medical Center
 Room 2B 205 240 1275
 400 Irving St., 2nd Floor
 Washington, D.C. 20316-5123
1-800-723-8340
 www.wriisc.gov

“My WRIISC visit increased my peace of mind from 50 to 100% and led to a better understanding of my health care.”



War Related Illness & Injury Study Center

Information for Veterans

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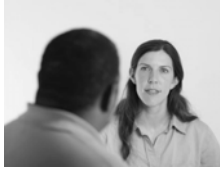
Exposure Assessment

- Occupational and environmental medicine physicians conduct exposure evaluations
- Also done as a stand alone service to any Veteran of any era
- Can be done over the telephone for Veterans living around the U.S.

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Exposure Assessment

- Risk communication principles are applied throughout the assessment
- Basic toxicology reviewed
- Exposures from before, during and after deployment are discussed
- Common exposures- i.e., neurotoxins, anthrax, depleted uranium, burning trash, sandstorms, pyridostigmine bromide



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Exposure Clinic

The War Related Illness and Injury Study Center (WRIISC) is a National Program with expertise and staff devoted to addressing Veterans' deployment and service related exposure concerns.

Veterans, do you have questions about:

- Anthrax Vaccine?
- Depleted Uranium?
- Multiple immunizations?
- Preventative medications?
- Nerve agents or their antidotes?
- Sandstorms?
- Air pollution from burning trash?
- Soot from oil well fires?
- Jet Fuel Solvents?
- Pesticides?
- Heavy Metals?
- The impact of exposures on family members?


We can help you address your concerns!

If you are a Veteran who has questions about things you may have been exposed to while deployed and whether any of those exposures might cause you to have health problems now or in the future, you can request a consultation with one of our physicians or clinicians who specialize in environmental medicine. We will document your visit in your VA computerized medical record along with any follow-up recommendations made by our exposure clinicians. You will also receive a letter discussing our impression and findings. If you live too far to travel to one of the WRIISCs, you can arrange for a consultation over the phone.

For more information on our exposure consult services, please contact the WRIISC located nearest you (see back cover for contact information). You can also visit our Web site at: www.warrelatedillness.va.gov

The WRIISC is a National VA post deployment health resource and **we are here to help you!** **27**

Education & Risk Communication



Focus on communicating and providing education and training that will enhance knowledge of medically unexplained conditions and syndromes.

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Education & Risk Communication

- WRIISC staff ensures that risk communication is an integral part of research and all the clinical services
- Provides summary to serve as a "roadmap" that focuses on enhancing the Veteran's understanding of their medical conditions and health concerns


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Outreach and Networking

- Structured outreach strategy to reach Veterans via presentations and face to face meetings with:
 - VA and non-VA providers
 - VAMC Directors and VISN Directors
 - Representatives of Veteran Support Organizations (VSOs)
 - Staff of VetCenters
 - Military Community
 - Families

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The War Related Illness and Injury Study Center
The War Related Illness and Injury Study Center (WRIISC, pronounced "wisk") is a national VA program to develop and provide expertise in post-deployment health for Veterans and their health care providers. Recognizing deployed Veterans have unique health care problems, we strive to improve the health of Veterans with war related illnesses and injuries.





We provide specialized clinical and referral services to **Veterans and their health care providers.**
There are three WRIISCs, they are located in East Orange, New Jersey, Washington, D.C. and Palo Alto, California.

Call us today. Help us help our Veterans!
For more information call our National Referral Program Coordinator at:
1-202-461-1013
or one of our three locations:

1-800-248-8005
War Related Illness and Injury Study Center
Department of Veterans Affairs
New Jersey Health Care System
3822 Trenton Ave.
Madison, NJ 07017-1022

1-888-482-4376
War Related Illness and Injury Study Center
VA Palo Alto Health Care System
2801 Stephenson Ave.
Palo Alto, CA 94304-1200

1-800-722-8340
War Related Illness and Injury Study Center
VA Medical Center
Room 2B 202 465 1279
50 Irving St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20422-0002



War Related Illness & Injury Study Center
Information for Providers
Department of Veterans Affairs

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Educational offerings

- **Veterans:**
 - Fact sheets
 - Provide reference information about topics including exposures of concern, exercise, self management
- **Providers:**
 - Fact sheets
 - Conferences
 - Medically Unexplained Symptoms (MUS,) Exposures

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Power of the WRIISC Concept

- A recent Persian Gulf War Veteran story...
 - Illustrating research informing clinical practice and vice versa

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