

Update on Post Deployment Health Services (Related to the Gulf War)

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General Update

- Gulf War Registry continues to grow; currently about 180,000 Veterans.
- Airborne Hazard and Burn Pit Registry is the fastest growing with 155,000 participants. This includes about 18,000 GW Veterans.
- Published recently a Gulf War Registry Newsletter available on line at: <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/publications/gulf-war/gulf-war-2018/index.asp>
- Bi-weekly calls with the National Gulf War Resource Center.
- Provide additional outreach; primarily to environmental health coordinators and clinicians. We just had a 170 person three day conference in St. Louis that covered GW topics in detail.



Case Definition Project

- PDHS working with other VA offices and DoD experts responded to GAO concerns about the lack of a single case definition. PDHS created a seven step plan to hopefully create a single clinical case definition for GWI/CMI. VA is moving forward to implement this plan.
- An important part of the plan is two research studies.
- The first of these is underway and is a sophisticated chart review process at the NJ WRIISC – currently getting IRB and other approvals.

Three Aims NJ WRIISC Project

1. Assemble a dataset of symptoms, occupational and environmental exposures, diagnosed health conditions, deployment/military history and clinical biomarkers from self-reported surveys and medical records on a cohort of Gulf War Veterans.
 - NJ WRIISC will utilize two cohorts of GWVs for the study sample:
 - WRIISC (CA, NJ, DC sites) evaluated between 2001 and 2018
 - Cooperative Study Program 585-Gulf War Era Cohort and Biorepository (GWECEB)
2. Analyze prevalence and relative performance of the Kansas, CDC, CMI CPG, and new definitions by determining GWI prevalence in the WRIISC and CSP 585 cohorts using each definition and agreement (Kappa scores) between definitions.
3. Validate the optimal case definition (from options developed in #2 with expert consensus) and examine the relative contribution of self-reported information and information abstracted from the medical record.



Predictive Analytics

- The primary objective of this proposed project is to identify clinical and health service characteristics associated with deployment status (i.e. deployed to the Persian Gulf region during the Gulf War era).
- This proposes to use a data-driven classification to identify variables that distinguish between those with history of deployment during the Gulf War era to those with service during other eras or service during the Gulf War era without deployment to the Persian Gulf Region.
 - Note: In development phase pending approval/funding

Gulf War Registry Project

Contracted for two epidemiologists to use the GWR and other databases to study Gulf War related topics this FY.

The topics may include:

1. Morbidity analyses - including cancer using both the VACCR and the NAACCR.
2. Analyses of common GW issues such as fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, GI disorders and the depression.
3. Analysis of the prevalence of unexplained illness.

Two National Academies Studies in GW Series

- Inter-generational health effects.
 - Report due Nov 2018 (PL 114-315). This requires VA to create an advisory committee similar to the RAC. VA charged the committee to advise which federal agency should lead future research as pediatric and maternal child care is outside VA capabilities.

- Report on Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pits. To address concerns about these exposures for Gulf War I and later Veterans.

Epidemiology Program Studies

- 2005 Gulf War Study Data Re-entry
 - In August 2017, Dr. Dursa informed the RAC of data inconsistencies for the 2005 Gulf War Follow-Up Study. A review revealed that for certain questions on the survey, the electronic data in the database did not match the survey instrument. PDHS performed a complete data re-entry of paper surveys; completed in August of 2018.
- Longitudinal database construction
 - With the re-entered 2005 Gulf War study data there will be construction of a longitudinal database of the three data collections (1995, 2005, and 2012) for analysis.

Epidemiology Program Studies Continued

- Identification of Gulf War Veterans who met the criteria for GWI in 1995 at the time of the 1995 Gulf War study. (Dursa et al, Journal of Military and Veterans Health, July 2018)
 - This used data from the 1995 Gulf War study, Gulf War and Gulf War Era Veterans who met criteria for GWI (Kansas and CDC definitions. This is significant for two reasons:
 - Provides population prevalence estimates of GWI in the Gulf War veteran population, within 4 years of the war's end.
 - Over-sampling of females.
 - Other studies done at this time involved homogenous, non-representative samples of Gulf War Veterans. This provides a known sample of veterans that met the criteria early on after the war before the onset of age related chronic disease that could cause similar symptomology.
 - This is a valuable resource for recruitment into genomic and treatment studies.

Epidemiology Program Studies Continued

- Non VA-Medical records collection of Gulf War veterans in the PDHS Gulf War Follow Up Study who met the criteria for GWI in 1995 but do not use the VA for healthcare
 - Veterans identified from the 1995 PDH Gulf War Follow Up Study as meeting the criteria for GWI in 1995 and do not use the VA for health care were asked to participate in a medical records collection study from their private medical providers. Data collection will be completed at the end of this month
- Gender stratified analysis of the health status of Gulf War Veterans (under review at the Journal of Women's Health Issues)
 - In response to the National Academy of Science's recommendation in Gulf War and Health Volume 10, gender stratified analysis of health outcomes was performed on data from the 2012 Gulf War Follow Up Study.



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Please reach out to us and we will refer to others in PDHS or the WRIISCs as needed.