

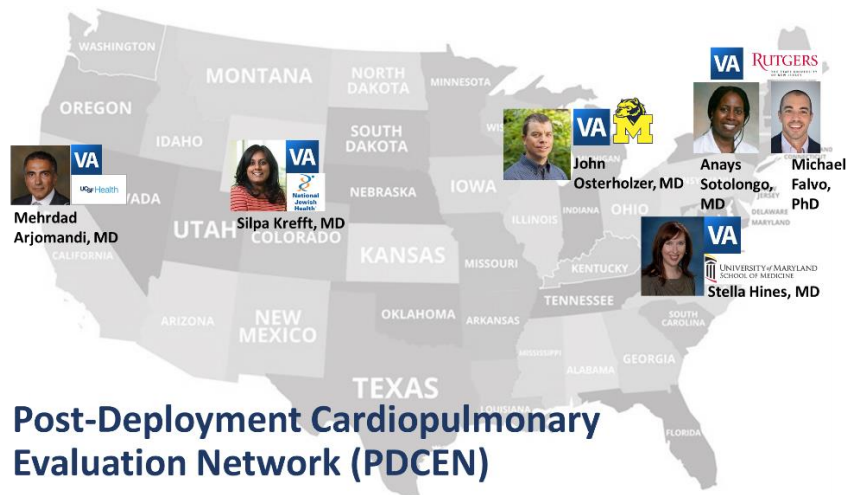


## U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration

Airborne Hazards and Burn Pits Center of Excellence

In May 2019, Congress and the President formally designated (Public Law 115-929) the [Airborne Hazards and Burn Pits Center of Excellence \(AHBPCE\)](#) at the New Jersey War Related Illness and Injury Study Center as a VA Center of Excellence. The Center conducts clinical and translational research related to airborne hazards and burn pits focusing on a range of health outcomes including unexplained shortness of breath, cough and dyspnea, among other related respiratory concerns. The AHBPCE has established a network of VA physician scientists, referred to as the **Post Deployment Cardiopulmonary Evaluation Network (PDCEN)** to conduct clinical evaluations enabling the AHBPCE to expand the clinical study of identified Veterans. The PDCEN is currently comprised of four Site Directors who are VA physician-scientists, all with academic appointments at the university affiliates, with unique expertise and interest in this topic area. Each site has leveraged unique resources from their university affiliates, including clinical and research training opportunities for university students, to enhance the Network.



### How does the PDCEN complement VA's strategic priorities?

1. "Put VA data to work for Veterans"
  - a. Veterans evaluated across the network are identified through the [VA's Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry \(AHOBPR\)](#) and their responses to the associated self-assessment questionnaire. These data are not only used to identify at-risk Veterans in need of evaluation, but also provide an opportunity to identify trends and patterns in this cohort. A few examples of our analyses are provided below.
2. "Increase the substantial real-world impact of VA research"
  - a. A primary goal of the PDCEN is to ensure quick translation of our best practices and what we learn to the field. This is particularly relevant for the Environmental Health Clinicians across VHA who are conducting AHOBPR clinical exams. We want to develop and evaluate strategies to support these frontline providers in providing Veterans with exposure concerns effective evidence-based practices.
3. "Build community through VA research"
  - a. A unique aspect of the PDCEN is its ability to engage colleagues and resources from their respective academic affiliates to enhance our approach and ultimately knowledge gained. In addition, this VA-university partnership affords opportunities to train the next generation of clinicians and scientists working on Veterans' health concerns as well as foster new collaborations.
4. "Military Exposures"
  - a. At the core of the PDCEN are our efforts to understand the impact of military and civilian exposures on clinical symptomatology. Our Network is composed of multiple Occupational and Environmental Medicine physicians and exposure scientists, and we partner with the VA's Cooperative Studies Program #595 to enhance our exposure characterizations.

**VA**



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**Recent PDCEN products:**

<https://www.atsjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1164/rccm.2017P13>

<https://www.thoracic.org/about/newsroom/newsletters/research-news-quarterly/resources/march-2020.pdf>

[https://www.atsjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1164/ajrccm-conference.2020.201.1\\_MeetingAbstracts.A4342](https://www.atsjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1164/ajrccm-conference.2020.201.1_MeetingAbstracts.A4342)

[https://www.atsjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1164/ajrccm-conference.2020.201.1\\_MeetingAbstracts.A4339](https://www.atsjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1164/ajrccm-conference.2020.201.1_MeetingAbstracts.A4339)

**PDCEN Site Directors:**

Mehrdad Arjomandi, MD (San Francisco VA Health Care System; University of California – San Francisco)

Stella Hines, MD (Baltimore VA Medical Center; University of Maryland School of Medicine)

Silpa Krefft, MD (Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center; National Jewish Health)

John Osterholzer, MD (VA Ann Arbor; University of Michigan)

**AHBPCE Directors:**

Anays Sotolongo, MD (VA NJ Health Care System; Rutgers University)

Michael Falvo, PhD (VA NJ Health Care System; Rutgers University)