



VA Airborne Hazards and Burn Pits Center of Excellence

Improving Veteran Health through Research, Education, and Clinical Care

The Airborne Hazards and Burn Pits Center of Excellence was established and congressionally recognized in 2019 as a part of VA's War Related Injury and Illness Study Center (WRIISC). The Center specializes in clinical and translational research that uses scientific insights to help improve health outcomes for Veterans exposed to airborne hazards while deployed.

The Center of Excellence focuses primarily on respiratory health issues including:

- Diagnostic approaches to unexplained shortness of breath
- Non-invasive techniques for small airway assessment
- Evaluation of rare respiratory conditions
- Detecting emerging trends and patterns in post-deployment health conditions

To advance this mission, we collaborate with clinicians and researchers throughout VA, the Department of Defense, and academia.

Research

Center of Excellence researchers use data from the VA Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry, clinical evaluations, and other sources to identify testable research questions and conduct in-depth studies that can help VA better diagnose and treat health concerns related to airborne hazard exposures.

In one such study, we found that exposure to blast waves during deployment could independently contribute to respiratory symptoms often associated with airborne hazard exposures. In collaboration with Walter Reed Army Institute of Research and Baylor College of Medicine, we have expanded this study to help improve diagnostic assessment of post-deployment respiratory symptoms.

Research conducted by the Center of Excellence and our collaborators is regularly published in peer-reviewed journals and presented at national and international scientific meetings.

About the WRIISC

VA's WRIISC is a national program dedicated to addressing Veterans' unique post-deployment health concerns. Through an interdisciplinary approach, we provide specialized diagnostic and treatment recommendations for a variety of post-deployment health issues.

The WRIISC also works with clinical and research teams inside and outside of the VA health care system to help improve Veteran care and treatment for these issues. WRIISC sites are located in New Jersey, California, and Washington, D.C.



Specialized Clinical Consultations

Through the Center of Excellence, we established a Post-Deployment Cardiopulmonary Evaluation Network (PDCEN) comprised of pulmonary and occupational health experts from across the VA health care system and academia. The network conducts in-depth clinical evaluations for Veterans with specific health concerns who have been evaluated as a part of the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry or are referred by clinicians at other VA facilities.

Veterans invited to participate in PDCEN evaluations may undergo extensive exams and diagnostic testing including, but not limited to:

- Comprehensive health history and physical examination
- Detailed lifetime exposure assessment including before, during, and after deployment
- Advanced cardiopulmonary function testing, forced oscillometry, bronchoprovocation, and cardiopulmonary exercise testing
- Ear, nose, and throat examination including sinus imaging
- Chest imaging
- Sleep studies
- Mental health screenings
- Lab work

Data from these evaluations are used to make treatment recommendations for individual Veterans, support research studies, and identify trends in health outcomes to improve care standards and treatment protocols.

We encourage all Veterans concerned about their military exposures to talk to their health care provider, apply for VA health care, and file a claim for compensation and benefits. Eligible Veterans may also join the VA Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry. Visit www.publichealth.va.gov/airbornehazards to learn more.

VA Post-Deployment Cardiopulmonary Evaluation Network



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Outreach and Education

To complement the Center of Excellence's research and clinical work, our education team also develops and delivers educational programming to promote a better understanding of post-deployment health issues. We offer virtual classes for Veterans on airborne hazard exposures as well as a variety of informational materials for Veterans, their families, and Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs).

Additionally, we have created training modules for health care providers on a variety of post-deployment health topics. These trainings are available to both VA and non-VA community providers for continuing education credit via the TRAIN Learning Network at www.train.org/VHA. VA providers can also access them via VA's Talent Management System (TMS).

Apply for VA Health Care: www.VA.gov/health-care or call 877-222-8387

File a Claim: www.VA.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim

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