

Health Surveillance for a New Generation of U.S. Veterans

Purpose: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) wants to learn more about the health of veterans, including both those who were and those who were not deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom. Medical researchers will use the survey to assess the effects of deployment. Our goal is to improve healthcare and prevention efforts for all veterans.

Authority to conduct research: This survey has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of the Washington, DC VA Medical Center and by Office of Management and Budget.

Your rights:

- This survey is voluntary. It's up to you whether to answer the survey.
- **Are there any benefits?** You will receive no direct benefit. Participation will not affect your rights to VA care and benefits, but will improve VA's understanding of what health services veterans need.
- If you decide to participate, you have a choice to fill out the enclosed paper survey or answer this same survey online. To answer online, please use the secure username and password created for you on the cover letter.
- If you decide to participate, you can stop at any time. You can skip any questions that you don't want to answer.

Privacy and confidentiality:

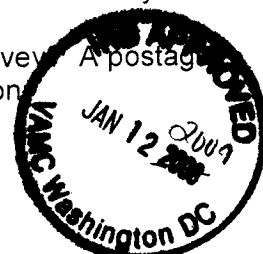
- VA complies with laws about privacy (Privacy Act, Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act). The research team will review VA medical and VA benefits records.
- Your unique personal identifiers (name, social security number) will be used to connect survey data with your medical and other military records, including information in your VA records on Sickle-Cell Disease, alcohol use, drug use, and AIDS/HIV infection. After linkage is completed, the unique identifiers will be stripped from study data files so medical researchers cannot identify you individually.
- VA will make every effort to keep your answers strictly confidential. Survey data will not be shared with military commands, disability evaluators, insurance companies, or anyone not directly involved in research.
- If the study findings are reported in medical journals or at meetings, you will not be identified by name or any other means. You have the right to tell people about your answers or involvement in this study.
- You can decide you no longer want to be in this study at any time. If you withdraw, no new information will be collected and you will continue to receive all medical care or benefits for which you are eligible. If you have questions about your rights as a human subject, you may contact the Associate Chief of Staff for Research at 202-745-8133 or the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board (extension 8373) at 202-745-8000 or toll free at 888-553-0242. If you have questions about the study or if you want to withdraw from the study, please contact the study Principal Investigator at 202-254-0370 or toll free at 800-211-5272 during the day.

About the survey:

- **How long will it take?** We think it will take most people 30-45 minutes to complete the survey.
- **Are there any risks?** Some of the questions deal with sensitive subjects, including your combat experience and mental health, so we can get a more complete understanding of your health. Some people get distressed when answering questions. **If you experience any distress related to this survey or for other reasons, please call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) at any time.**
- **How long is this study?** This is a 10-year study and we plan to survey veterans every 3 years. You will be asked to complete another survey in about 3 years, through the mail or online. All surveys will be completely voluntary.
- This research will be more useful if you participate. Would you please fill out the survey? A postage paid envelope is included. Please return this signed form to let us know your decision.

Yes, I voluntarily consent.

No, I do not want to participate.



Signature of veteran

Date

Thank you very much for your time. Your answers are very important and will help VA provide better healthcare for veterans.