

Office of Public Health “Atomic Veteran” Related Programs

Presentation to the Veterans Advisory Board on Dose Reconstruction
July 23, 2013

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- Outreach efforts
- Ionizing Radiation Registry
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- Future activities
- Questions and feedback

VA's Administrations

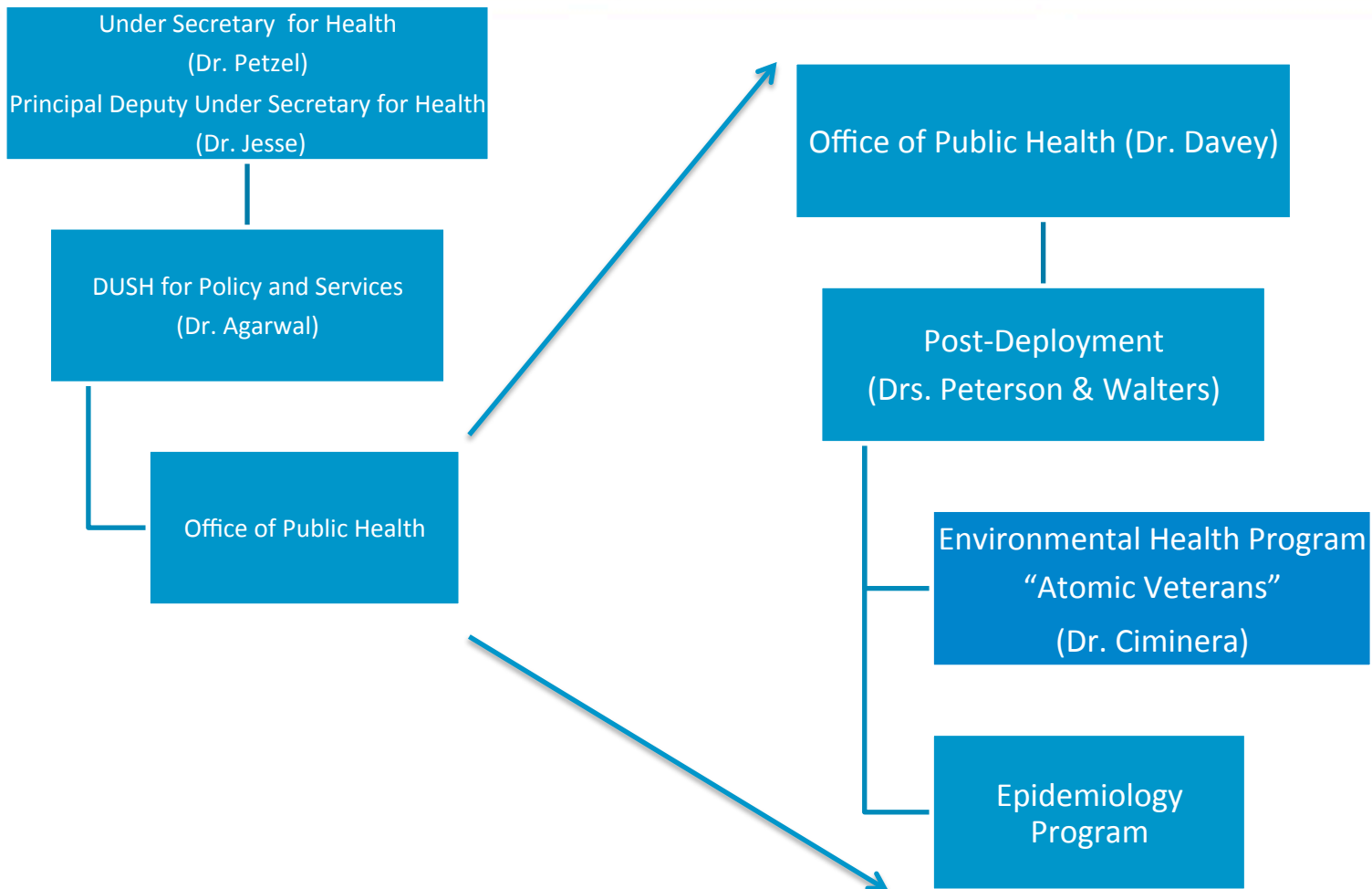
The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is one of the three major administrations of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Veterans
Health
Administration
(VHA)

National
Cemetery
Administration
(NCA)

Veterans
Benefits
Administration
(VBA)

Where we fit in the Veterans Health Administration



Office of Public Health (OPH) – Responsibilities Related to “Atomic Veterans”

- VA/VHA policy development
- Epidemiologic research
- Outreach
- Ionizing Radiation Registry (IRR) Program
- Medical opinions
- Subject matter support to Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), media, Congress, and other stakeholders

Research

- OPH Epidemiology program is collaborating in the One Million U.S. radiation and Veterans Study (Atomic Veterans Study ?)¹
 - 115,000+ Veterans present at above ground nuclear tests are being followed for 20 more years
 - All cancers and other causes of death are being evaluated
 - Comprehensive dose reconstruction methodology is being used
 - Dose-response analyses is evaluating disease relationship to radiation

¹The Boice Report #7. Health Physics News, December 2012.

Past Research

- [Cancer mortality among the highest exposed U.S. atmospheric nuclear test participants.](#)
Dalager NA, Kang HK, Mahan CM.
J Occup Env Med 2000;42:798–805.
- [A mortality follow-up study of WW II submariners who received nasopharyngeal radium irradiation treatment.](#)
Kang HK, Bullman TA, Mahan CM.
Am J Ind Med 2000;38:441–446.
- [Feasibility of an epidemiologic study of submariners who received radium irradiation treatment.](#)
Kang HK.
Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg 1996;115:433–437.
- [Cancer mortality risk among military participants of a 1958 atmospheric nuclear weapons test.](#)
Watanabe KK, Kang HK, Dalager NA.
Am J Public Health 1995;85:523–527.

Outreach- Approach

Initial outreach

- For Veterans not in the registry
- Advertise programs (does not require frequent updates)

Targeted updates

- For Veterans in the registries and other focused groups
- Post-Deployment Health newsletter covering a variety of health concerns
- More timely than current newsletters
- Frequent updates



Depleted Uranium (DU) Fact Sheet ^{5/13/09}
Information for veterans, their families and others about depleted uranium

- Veterans Involved**
- Gulf War veterans exposed to depleted uranium (DU) through friendly fire.
 - Others potentially exposed to DU, including Bosnia, Gulf War, and OIF/OEF veterans.

What Is Depleted Uranium?
DU is a byproduct of the uranium enrichment process that makes nuclear fuel. DU has approximately 60 percent of the radioactivity and the same chemical toxicity as natural uranium, which is present in small amounts in our environment and to which we are all exposed through our food and water. In the early 1960s, the U.S. began testing DU for projectile use because of its ability to penetrate armor made with less dense metals. For more information visit the DU library at <http://fhp.osd.mil/du/>.

When Is Depleted Uranium Hazardous?
DU is a chemical and radiation health hazard primarily if internalized, such as through embedded fragments, contaminated wounds, and inhalation or ingestion. When a projectile made with DU penetrates a vehicle, small pieces of DU are created that can scatter and become embedded in muscle and soft tissue. In addition to DU wounds, soldiers exposed to DU in struck vehicles may inhale or swallow small airborne DU

al exposure is related to the amount of DU in a vehicle with DU weapons or DU shielding units of DU or external radiation. For more [p://fhp.osd.mil/du/healthEffects.jsp](http://fhp.osd.mil/du/healthEffects.jsp). [://fhp.osd.mil/du/faqs.jsp](http://fhp.osd.mil/du/faqs.jsp).

im has been established at the Baltimore VA DU exposure and to provide recommendations if embedded fragments. The program for fragments involves detailed physical exams l.

veterans concerned about DU exposure tionnaire and a mail-in, 24-hour urine test for

Outreach – Brochures

“Are you an Atomic Veteran?” Brochure

Provides information about eligibility for VA compensation and medical care, dose reconstruction, medical claim determination, Ionizing Radiation Registry Program, and more

“Special Environmental Health Registry Evaluation Programs for Veterans” Brochure

Provides an overview of five VA health registry programs that track the health of Veterans exposed to environmental hazards during military service: Ionizing Radiation, Agent Orange, Gulf War, Depleted Uranium, and Toxic Embedded Fragments



Outreach –Newsletters, Announcements

Ionizing Radiation Reviews

- “Information for Veterans Exposed to Ionizing Radiation and their Families”
- Overview of benefits
- Special focus articles
- Where to get additional information
- 8 issues and one VBDR supplemental edition were published

VBDR Meeting Announcements

- Postcards
- Government email delivery systems
- VSO’s

Volume 6, No. 1 March 2012

Ionizing Radiation Review

Information for Veterans Exposed to Ionizing Radiation and Their Families

New Brochure: Are YOU an Atomic Veteran?

The Office of Public Health, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), has published a new brochure titled “Are YOU An Atomic Veteran?”

The trifold brochure provides information to Veterans exposed to ionizing radiation during their military service.

Highlights of the brochure include:

- Presumptive service-connected conditions
- Why Veterans should get a health registry evaluation and how to schedule one
- Benefits and claims
- Information on the Veterans’ Advisory Board on Dose Reconstruction (VBDR)

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Quick Look

FEATURES

- New Brochure: Are YOU an Atomic Veteran? 1
- VBDR Continues Work for Atomic Veterans, Plans San Antonio Meeting for March 2012. 1
- Update: Veterans Advisory Board on Dose Reconstruction New Chair Appointed 2
- VBDR Loses Its First Chairman 2
- Free Health Registry Evaluation for Veterans Exposed to Ionizing Radiation 3
- VBDR Announces 2012 Public Meeting 4
- VA Benefits and Services for Aging Veterans 4
- Connect to VA Caregiver Support 6
- Disability Compensation from VA 8
- Benefits Book is Available 9

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VA U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration

Public Meeting Announcement

VETERANS' ADVISORY BOARD ON DOSE RECONSTRUCTION (VBDR)

Tuesday, July 23, 2013 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Public Comment Session 4 to 5 p.m.
Arlington Hilton Hotel
950 Stafford Street
Arlington, VA 22203

Agenda will include radiation-related presentations from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DoD) on the following topics:

- ▶ Review of Atomic Veterans Epidemiology Study: VBDR
- ▶ Radiation Claims Compensation Program: Veterans Benefits Administration
- ▶ Radiation-Related Programs: Veterans Health Administration
- ▶ VA and DoD's Communications Plans: Department of Veterans Affairs
- ▶ Dose Reconstruction Updates: McMurdo Sound, Nuclear Test Personnel Review

The full meeting agenda is available at http://vbdr.org/meetings/2013/Agenda_July2013.pdf

Outreach- Website

Post Deployment Health Website

- For Veterans who may have been exposed to a range of chemical, physical, and environmental hazards during military service.
- Provides up to date information on topics of potential concern to Veterans.
- Pages added in September 2012
 - Fukushima
 - LORAN-C
 - McMurdo

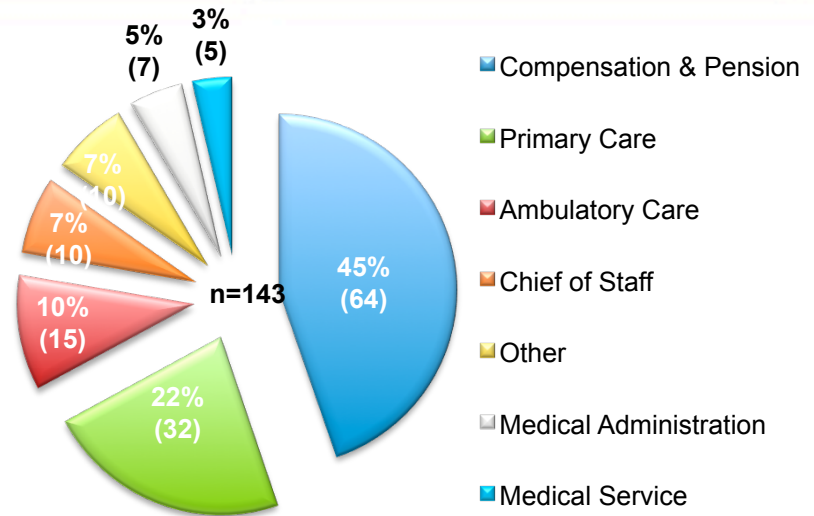


www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures

Ionizing Radiation Registry (IRR)

“HAIG” Survey of VHA’s Environmental Registry Program

- Clinicians and coordinators at each VA medical center assigned to see Veterans with environmental concerns
- First ever survey to gather baseline information
- Understand the organizational structure, staffing, and performance
- Identify and streamline processes, procedures, and services available to system wide for Veterans with Environmental Exposure concerns
- Survey completed in 2012



Occupation	Count	Percent
Physician (MD/DO)	142	32%
Program Support Assistant/Clerk	106	24%
Nurse Practitioner	86	20%
Physician Assistant	51	13%
Other	40	8%
Registered Nurse	6	1%
Licensed Practical Nurse	4	1%
Health Technician	2	0%

IRR data (as of 6/24/2013)

- **Total Initial exams: 25294**
- **Total Follow up exams: 1252**
- **Trend of initial exams over recent history:**



Medical Opinions – Process

Presumptive illness claims adjudicated at VBA Jackson Regional Office (JRO)

- 38 CFR 3.309 (d) (2)
- 21 cancers listed are presumed to have been caused by radiation exposure
- Presumptive claims approved if part of a “radiation risk activity” population

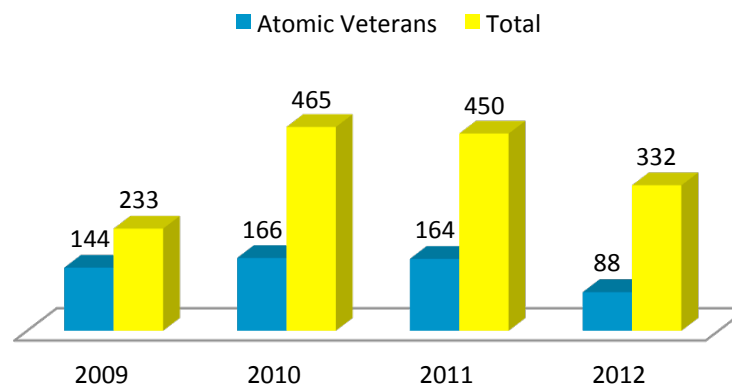
Non-presumptive illness claims forwarded to VBA Central Office for development and medical opinion by VHA, Office of Public Health

- 38 CFR 3.311
- The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Interactive Radio Epidemiological Program (IREP) is used to determine probability of causation (PC) for diseases in the database (cancers)
- If IREP calculates 50% or greater PC, the claim will receive a favorable opinion
- For claims not in IREP, other epidemiological evidence is used to support the opinion
- Occupational, medical, and other radiation related claims are handled separately

Medical Opinions – Workload

- Average medical opinion processing time in OPH is 4 days
- 1492 medical opinions processed from 2009 through 2012
 - 574 (38%) were from Atomic Veterans, 62% occupational claims
 - 89 favorable opinions (6%) for Atomic Veterans: mostly skin cancer and Posterior Subcapsular Cataract (PSC)

Radiation Medical Opinions



Medical Opinions – Calendar Year 2012

- 332 total opinions in CY 2012
- 88 (27%) were for claims from Atomic Veterans
- 15 of 88 cases received favorable opinions
 - 12 of the 15 cases received favorable opinions for skin cancers
 - 11 of 12 had maximum estimated total dose to the skin of 550 rem
 - Defense Threat Reduction Agency expedited dose processing methodology
 - 3 of the 15 cases received favorable opinion for Posterior Subcapsular Cataract (PSC)
 - maximum estimated total dose to the lens of the eye of 28 rem
 - Defense Threat Reduction Agency expedited dose processing methodology

Medical Opinions – Calendar Year 2012

- 3 LORAN cases in CY 2012
- All received favorable opinions (2 skin cancer, 1 PSC)

Other Exposures (non-Atomic Veteran)

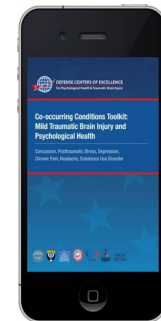
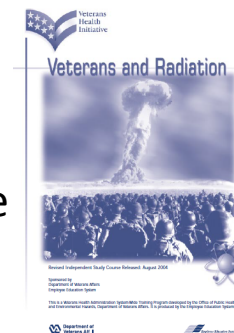
- The bulk of claims reaching OPH for medical opinions
 - Occupational exposures
 - Nuclear Weapons handling
 - Chernobyl, Hanford, Savannah River, etc.
 - Medical exposures
 - Depleted Uranium
 - LORAN-C
 - McMurdo
 - Operation Tomadachi

Provider Education – New Developments

Ionizing Radiation Registry (IRR) Program Procedures Handbook - being updated

“Environmental Exposure Medical App”

- Will provide “just-in-time” information to providers, patient care teams, and Veterans
- Contents include: taking an exposure history, the history of exposures during military service, potential and known health effects, preventive measures, and treatment
- Planned to be offered for free to non-VA audience



Veterans Health Initiative

- “Veterans and Radiation” undergoing update
- New TMS format for VA providers

Provider Education – New Developments

VA Environmental Exposure Pocket Card

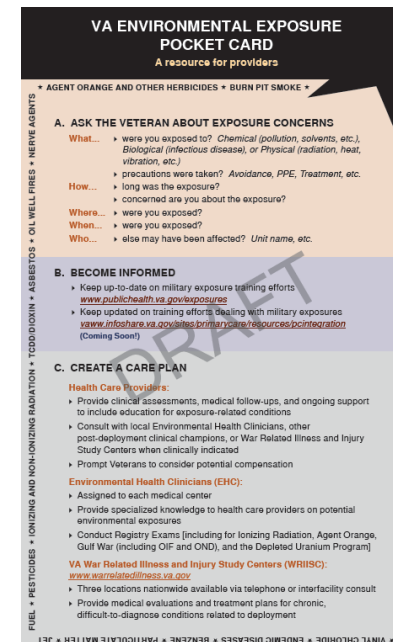
- Information on resources for primary care teams to assist Veterans who have environmental health concerns stemming from military service
- Distributed to 24,000 providers

Partnering with Primary Care Services

Highlight educational products for the Post-Deployment care of Veterans

Environmental Champions

2 workshops scheduled to “train the trainer”



Questions and Feedback

Thanks for your attention!