

# Department of Veterans Affairs

## Agency Fact Sheets



For more than 90 years, the Veterans Affairs Research and Development Program (VA Research) has leveraged health care discovery and innovation to improve the lives of Veterans and all Americans. Comprised of four key “services”-- Biomedical Laboratory, Clinical Science, Health Services, and Rehabilitation -- VA Research is driving progress against a host of deadly and debilitating health threats.<sup>1</sup>

### VA AT A GLANCE

VA is the nation's **largest integrated healthcare system**, and serves **9 million enrolled Veterans** each year.<sup>2</sup>

VA funded more than **2,000 medical, health services, and prosthetic research projects** in FY2019.<sup>3</sup>

Research at VA has resulted in **3 Nobel Prizes** and **7 Lasker awards**.<sup>4</sup>

### Million Veteran Program

The Million Veteran Program (MVP), a key initiative contributing to the White House Precision Medicine Initiative, is building the **largest genomic database in the world** tied to a health care system, with health information from over **1 million Veterans**.<sup>5</sup>

As of **May 2019**, there have been **over 750,000 enrollees**.<sup>6</sup>

Studies using MVP hold enormous potential for **preventing and treating diseases** that disproportionately affect Veterans, as well as those that affect the civilian population.

Current studies are already being conducted on illnesses including **cancer** and **diabetes**, as well as **PTSD** and **Gulf War Illness**.<sup>5</sup>

MVP plans to eventually expand enrollment to Veterans not currently enrolled in VA care, as well as to **active-duty service members** and other Department of Defense beneficiaries.<sup>6</sup>

### VA in Action

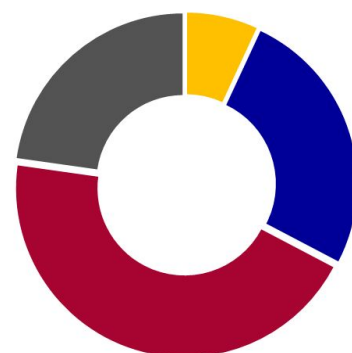
**Cardiac Pacemaker:** The first clinically successful cardiac pacemaker, a device implanted in the chest to control abnormal heart rhythms, was developed by VA researchers in 1960. Today, over **11,000 American Veterans** and **3 million people** worldwide have a cardiac pacemaker implanted.<sup>7</sup>

**Telehealth Program for Rural Vets:** In early 2018, VA launched the Telemedicine Outreach for PTSD (TOP) program, a pilot telehealth program that will give remote psychotherapy access to Veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. The program removes the long travel distances that are often a barrier to care for rural Veterans. To date, over **500 Veterans** living in rural areas are receiving treatment through phone and interactive video content.<sup>8</sup>

**Naloxone Distribution:** To combat opioid-related mortality, VA developed the National Opioid Overdose Education and Naloxone Distribution (OEND) program. Researchers were able to identify Veterans at risk for an opioid overdose and determine barriers for use, such as co-pays for education and naloxone medication, a prescription medication that reverses opioid overdoses. Today, over **90,000 Veterans** have received a prescription, preventing hundreds of opioid overdoses.<sup>9</sup>

### Americans Perceive Need for Greater Investment in Military-Relevant Health Research

Would you say government investment in health research for the benefit of military Veterans and service members is...?



7% Too Much      45% Not Enough  
26% About Right      23% Not Sure

Source: A Research!America poll of U.S. adults conducted in partnership with Zogby Analytics in January 2015

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## Veterans' Needs Vary

### Women Veterans:

Women make up the fastest-growing group within the Veteran population.<sup>10</sup> VA research focuses on a broad range of women's health issues, including gender differences in care access, impacts of military service, sexual trauma, reproductive care, and mental health.<sup>11</sup>

### Homeless Veterans:

Over 40,000 Veterans are homeless on any single night, the majority of which suffer from mental illness, alcohol and substance abuse, or co-occurring disorders.<sup>12</sup> The National Center on Homelessness among Veterans, part of VA, promotes recovery-oriented research, and works to integrate best practices into policies, programs, and services for homeless or at-risk Veterans.<sup>13</sup>

### Minority Veterans:

Minority Veterans make up about 22% of the Veteran population, a number that is expected to grow to 34% by 2040.<sup>14</sup> Minority Veterans are more likely to have illnesses such as diabetes and cancer, and often receive less care or care of lesser quality. VA's Center for Health Equity Research and Promotion (CHERP) is working to identify the factors underlying health discrepancies and ways to eliminate them.<sup>15</sup>

## VA-Academic Partnerships

**Over 90%** of U.S. medical schools partner with VA

**44,000 students**

rotated through VA facilities in 2016

**75% of physicians** receive part of their training at VA facilities

**These partnerships are essential for providing research, care and education to the Veteran population.**<sup>16</sup>

## VA Studies a Wide Range of Topics Affecting Veterans' Health



<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "About the Office of Research & Development."

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "Veterans Health Administration."

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "Office of Budget."

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "Overview of VA Research," June 2017.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "VA's Million Veteran Program (MVP)," September 2018.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "VA's voluntary research genetics program."

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "The invention of the cardiac pacemaker."

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "VA Launches Telehealth Program," March 2018.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "Opioid overdose education and naloxone distribution."

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "Women Veterans Health Care."

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "Overview of VA research on Women's Health."

<sup>12</sup> National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, "FAQ About Homeless Veterans."

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "National Center on Homelessness among Veterans."

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "Health Equity."

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "CHERP Overview."

<sup>16</sup> Association of American Medical Colleges, "VA & Academic Medicine," June, 2017.