# The Future of Female Service Members: Readiness and Research Gaps

Nurses' Week Initiative

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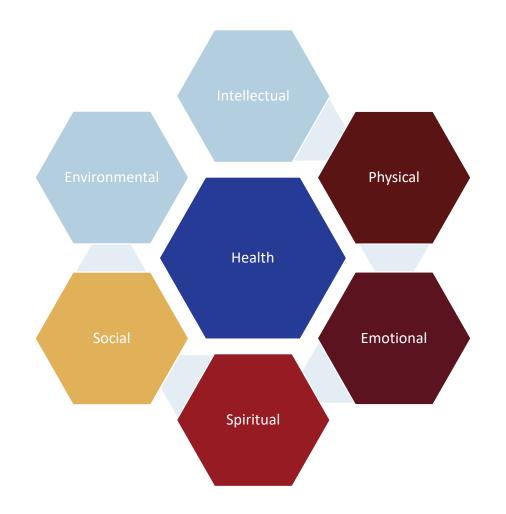
### Learning Objectives

At the end of the presentation, the learners will be able to:

- 1. Describe the health needs of military women.
- 2. Review the advisory committees that inform military leadership about health of women.
- 3. Explain the trajectory of one research interest group and how the group shaped military health research needs.
- 4. Discuss the possible future health needs of women.



### **Holistic Health**





#### What is Women's Health Research?

Quoted from Office of Research in Women's Health:

A person's health is influenced throughout their lifespan by many factors. Some of the most important factors include sex, gender, racial ethnicity, culture, environment, and socioeconomic status. Researchers are discovering the critical roles that **sex** (being male or female) and **gender identity** (including social and cultural factors) play in health, wellness, and disease progression. The discoveries being made through the study of women's health and sex differences are key to advancements in personalized medicine for both sexes.

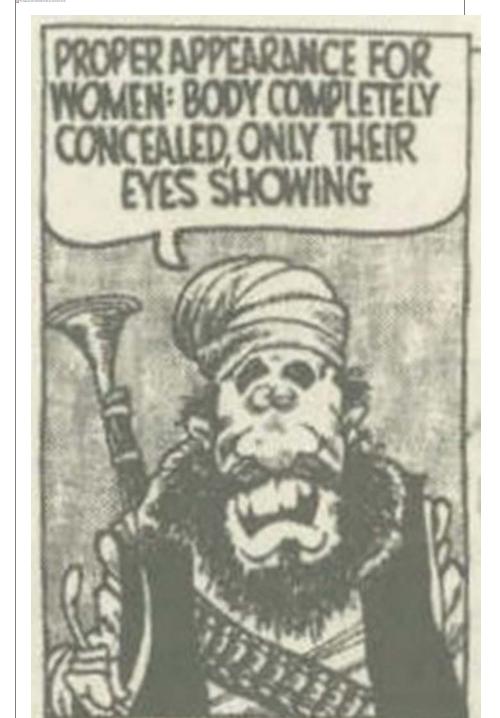


## Now, let's put women's health research in a military context...



https://www.stripes.com/news/half-of-americans-surveyed-say-all-servicemembers-are-heroes-1.549349





https://www.freep.com/opinion/mike-thompson/





JUSU ormed Services University

### All female C-130 Hercules aircrew to fly a combat mission



crew-in-combat-focuses-on-flying-not-gender/

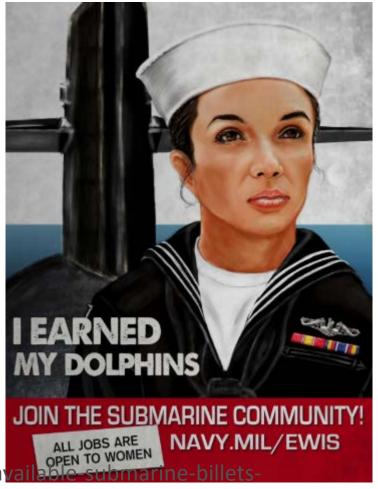


## First woman graduate of Marine Infantry Officer Course





## Navy Officer and Enlisted women serving on submarines



https://news.usni.org/2019/11/11/available\_submar outpaced-by-demand-from-female-sailors



**BG Yeager takes command of the 40<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division** 



https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/12/us/army-woman-infantry-division.html



### **Air Force Academy**





Usafa.edu





### **West Point**







# Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services



## Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services

- The Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) was established in
   1951
- Composed of civilian women and men who are appointed by the Secretary of Defense
- Provides advice and recommendations on matters and policies relating to the recruitment and retention, treatment, employment, integration, and well-being
- Instrumental in effecting changes to laws and policies pertaining to military women



## Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services

- 2020 Request for Information by DACOWITS:
  - Marketing Strategies
  - Exit and Retention surveys
  - Women in Aviation
  - Women in Space
  - Gender Integration Implementation Plans
  - Effect of Grooming Standards on Women's Health





#### Women in the Space Force

DACOWITS will recognize that the stand-up of a new Service enables key opportunities to shape a talent-driven and diverse workforce that incorporates modern policies relating to recruitment and retention, employment, integration, well-being and treatment of highly qualified professional women

- Innovative career models and personnel processes based on a 21<sup>st</sup> century approach to Human Capital Management
- Added flexibility for women to pursue opportunities both within and outside of the Space Force (career intermission and return to USSF, i.e. service in the Reserve Component, work in industry, education, personal purposes, etc.)
- Opportunities in highly technical fields for women with Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math backgrounds
- Service transfer options to leverage a broad range of skill sets and experiences
- More opportunities for women to serve in leadership roles
- Establishment of a values-based culture that emphasizes equal opportunity, fair treatment, and respect—a unique shaping opportunity







- Sponsored by TriService Nursing Research Program (<a href="https://www.usuhs.edu/tsnrp/">https://www.usuhs.edu/tsnrp/</a>)
- MWHRIG modeled the program similar to the Veterans Administration (VA)
   https://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/for\_researchers/womens\_health/
- Ten years of women's health research culminated to updated reviews to determine the topic area and quality of research proliferation.
- MWHRIG has several agenda items, one of which determine military women's health research priorities (<a href="http://triservicenursing.org/rig/womenshealth/">http://triservicenursing.org/rig/womenshealth/</a>)



Sponsored by TriService Nursing Research Program (<a href="https://www.usuhs.edu/tsnrp/">https://www.usuhs.edu/tsnrp/</a>)



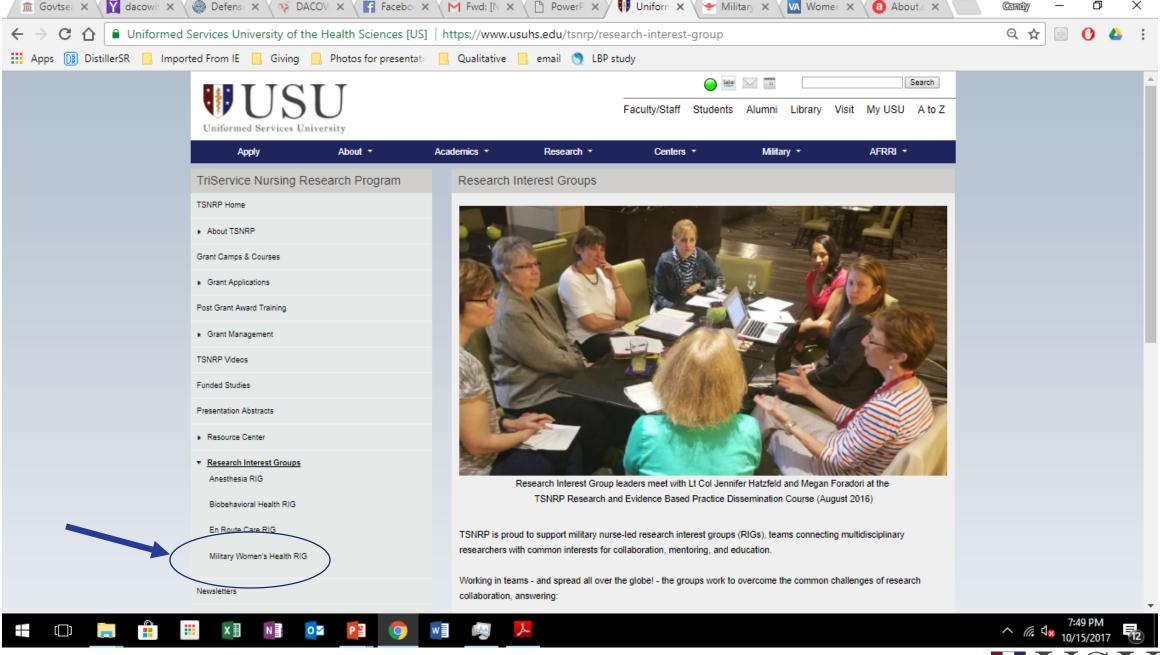
#### Mission:

To expand the foundation of knowledge upon which can be built expert practices in the preventive, acute, and chronic health care of servicewomen and evidence-based policies and programs

#### Goal:

To pave the way for evidence-based decision-making that support the well-being and health of all women serving in the military





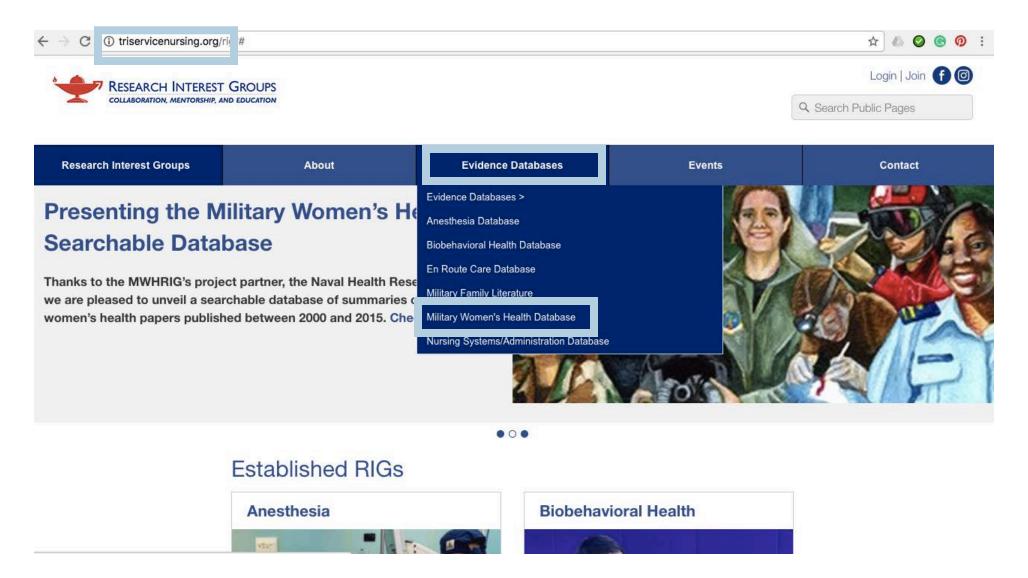
Interested in military women's health and think this MWHRIG could be a resource for you and your work? Would you like to inquire about an initiative of the group?

Email emily.bell.ctr@usuhs.edu and find the MWHRIG on the web (not official websites):

Facebook: "Military Women's Health Research Interest Group"

Research Interest Group website: www.triservicenursing.org/womenshealth







A Call to Action for Evidence-Based Military Women's Health Care: Developing a Women's Health Research Agenda That Addresses Sex and Gender in Health and Illness

Biological Research for Nursing 12(2) 171-177 © The Austonia 2010 Reprints and permission agrepub.com/journalsPermissions.na DOI: 10.1177/1099000410375299 http://bm.sagepub.com **SSAGE** 

Lori Trego, PhD, CNM1, Candy Wilson, PhD, WHNP2, and Nancy Steele, PhD, WHNP<sup>3</sup>

#### Abstract

Women in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines are serving in complex occupational specialties that sustain national policy and ensure combat effectiveness of our forces. Their noies have evolved from supportive noies during early conflicts to active noies in combat support and counterinsurgency operations today. Although women have received military health care over the past three decades, sex- and gender-specific care has been limited to reproductive needs and has randy addressed military-specific health risks and outcomes. The complexity of military jobs and increased deployments to combat operations has led to increased occupational and health risks for women. As differences have been noted between men and women's deployment-related health outcomes, it is incumbent on the Military Health Care System (MHS) to create an evidence base that addresses sex and gender differences in the health of its service members. A working group of military women's health advanced practice nurses (APN) and research experts proposes to address this gap in knowledge and practices through sex- and gender-specific research. A sexand gender-based research agenda for military women's health will be a valuable instrument to those who are dedicated to the health of this population, including members of the Army, Navy, and Air Force military nursing community. Using the knowledge that the research agenda generates, military health care providers can develop clinical practice guidelines, influence policy, and participate in program development to improve the health of servicewomen. Shaping a sex- and gender-specific military women's health research agenda will create the foundation for future evidence-based care.

#### Keywords

women's health, military health care, research

training and combat settings, with consequent physical and mental health outcomes (Bond, 2004; Murdoch et al., 2006). Along with expanded roles and deployments came health care implications as a result of training accidents, hazardous exposures, infectious dismilitary women's duties, combined with the opportunities for Command, Landstahl Regional Medical Center, Landstahl, Germany longer careers in the services, precipitated the need for sex- and gender-specifichealth care that addresses acute and chronic health Corresponding Author:

The importance of sex- and gender-specific care generally 96859, USA was not widely recognized until the 1990s in the United States. Email Lorizingo@stamy.ml

Women have over a 100-year history of serving the U.S. In response to the recognized gap in the knowledge and care military; yet, it has only been over the past one third of this of women, U.S. agencies made a concerted effort to support historythat there has been an effort to offer health care services sex- and gender-specific health research, and, in the NIH that are sensitive to their sex- and gender-specific needs. Revitalization Act of 1993, the National Institutes of Health (Morden, 1990; Murdoch et al., 2006). Although the duties of (NIH) required the inclusion of women in all clinical research. military women in the early years were generally supportive in In 1993, a Congressional directive in the National Defense nature, the Vietnam War engaged women in more active roles in Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1994, H.R. 2401,

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Uniformed Services University

Trego LL, Wilson C & Steele N (2010) A call to action for evidence-based military women's health care: Developing a women's health research agenda that addresses sex and gender in health and illness. Biological Research in Nursing, 13, 171-177.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> U.S. Army Nurse Corps, Nursing Research Service, Tripler Army Medical Center, Honolulu, HL USA

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> U.S. Air Force Nurse Corps, 59 CSPG/SGVUS, Lackband AFB, TX USA. eases, direct combat injuries, and combat stress. The evolution of a U.S. Army Nana Corps, Chief, Nursing Research, European Regional Medical

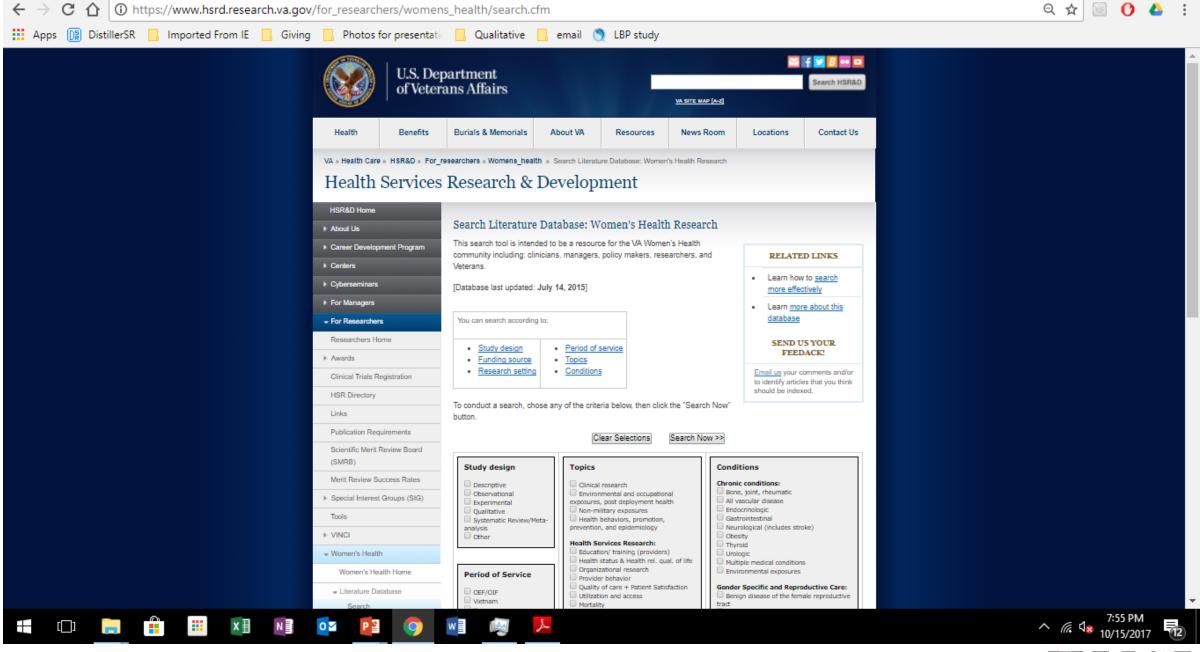
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(https://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/for researchers/womens health/)



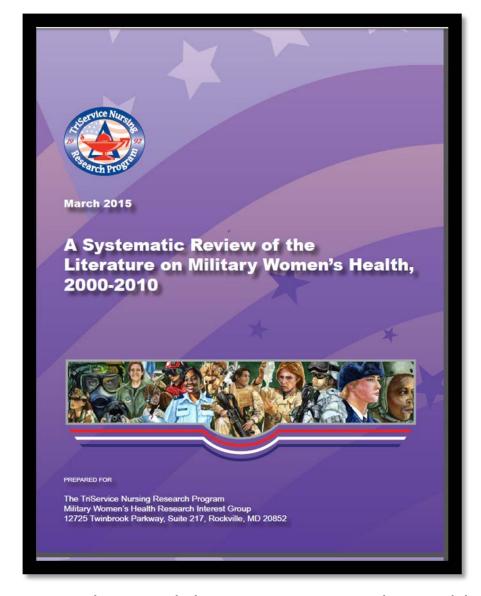


Uniformed Services University









Trego L, Rychnovsky J, Wilson C, Steele N, and the Consortium on the Health and Readiness of Servicewomen (2015)



#### Creating and Sustaining a Military Women's Health Research Interest Group

Lt Col Candy Wilson, NC, USAF COL Lori Trego, AN, USA CAPT Jacqueline Rychnovsky, NC, USN

LTC (Ret) Nancy Steele, AN, USA Megan Foradori, MSN, RN

#### ABSTRACT

In 2008, four doctorate military nurse scientists representing the triservices (Army, Navy, and Air Force) identified a common interest in the health and care of all women in the armed forces. For 7 years, the team's shared vision to improve servicewomen's health inspired them to commit to a rigorous schedule of planning, developing, and implementing an innovative program that has the capability of advancing scientific knowledge and influencing health policy and practice through research. The ultimate goal of the Military Women's Health Research Interest Group (MWHRIG) is to support military clinicians and leaders in making evidence-based practice and policy decisions. They developed a 4-pronged approach to cultivate the science of military women's healthcare: evaluate the existing evidence, develop a research agenda that addresses gaps in knowledge, facilitate the collaboration of multidisciplinary research, and build the bench of future researchers. The MWHRIG has been a resource to key leaders; its value has been validated by multiservice and multidisciplinary consultations. However, the journey to goal attainment has only been achieved by the enduring commitment of these MWHRIG leaders and their passion to ensure the health and wellbeing of the many women who serve in the United States military. This article describes their journey of dedication.

The number of women in the military has steadily in- with making evidence-based decisions. To advance the creased since the Selective Service draft ended in 1973 science of military women's health, the next steps were and now comprises 15% of the active duty military to perform a systematic review of the published literapopulation and 10% of the deployed population.1 Con-ture, examine utilization of the Military Healthcare Sysgress mandated that, starting in January 2016, military tem (MHS), and identify the gaps in knowledge. Finally, women would be afforded the same opportunities for they strove to create a military women's health research be serving in the most austere conditions. Women will paramount that research be available, but it must also compete with men for these once restricted combat as- be highly relevant to guide decision-making as the Destandards. In order to ensure the health and well-being demographic shift and force multiplier of women as they progress in military roles and/or optimize their health in their current military roles, military health care professionals and leaders should consult. The MWHRIG founders first established the need for lack of a consolidated review.

accessible to military clinicians and leaders charged promotion programs. It was concluded that this absence

combat assignments as men. As a result, women could agenda that would guide future research. Not only is it signments under the same physical and performance partment of Defense (DoD) embarks on this significant

#### ESTABLISHING THE PURPOSE OF THE MWHRIG

current evidence-based knowledge on women's health the systematic review and gap analysis efforts with a issues and care. The research that is currently available strong position paper. The MWHRIG foundational pais typically published in peer reviewed journals, yet is per was entitled, "A Call to Action for Evidence-Based not readily accessible to military care providers and de-Military Women's Health Care: Developing a Women's cision makers. The Military Women's Health Research Health Research Agenda that Addresses Sex and Gender Interest Group (MWHRIG) was founded to address the in Health and Illness." The article highlighted female gender-specific deployment and in-garrison health care disparities based on the Armed Forces Health Surveil-In 2008, four officers (2 Army Nurse Corps, one Navy lance Center's Medical Surveillance Monthly Reports Nurse Corps, and one Air Force Nurse Corps) identified from 2007-2009. These reports identified health effects the need to compile all peer reviewed research publica- related to deployment to Operation Iraqi Freedom and tions on military women's health issues and care in the Operation Enduring Freedom, as well as utilization past decade to promote awareness in the professional trends by female service members within the MHS military community. The initial goal of the MWHRIG The article emphasized the dearth of scientific-based was to identify and grade existing research and build a information relevant to military women's occupational database with the results that could be searchable and risks, training requirements, and gender-specific health

http://www.cs.amedd.army.mil/amedd\_journal.aspx

Wilson C, Trego LL, Rychnovsky J, Steele N, & Foradori M (2015). Creating and sustaining a military women's health research interest group. AMEDD Journal. April-June 2015. 76-80.



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- Ten years of women's health research culminated to updated reviews to determine the topic area and quality of research proliferation.



### Military Women's Health: Scoping Review & Gap Analysis

To develop an agenda for future research on the health of U.S. service women by:

- Mapping the breadth of topics within the peer-reviewed literature
- Assessing the quality of the existing peer-reviewed literature
- Comparing topics addressed in the existing literature with
  - Recent military healthcare utilization data
  - Organizational priorities of the recent past
- Using results to identify significant gaps in the scientific literature

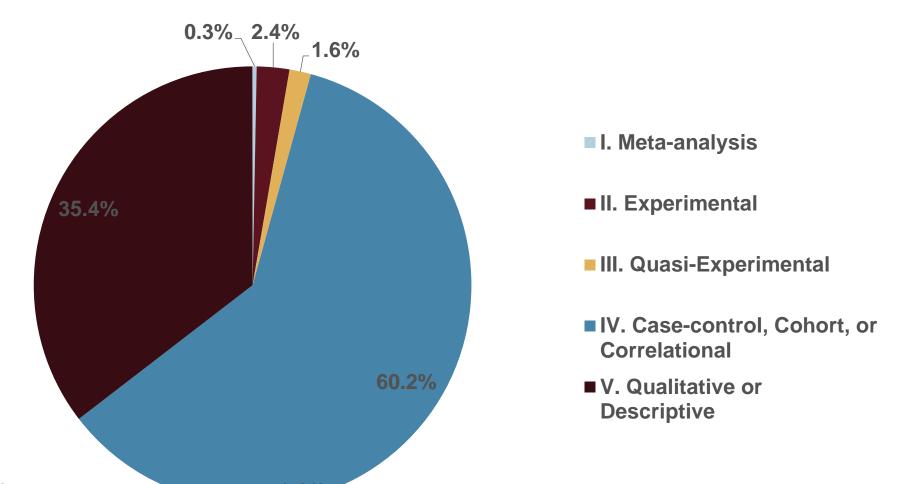


### **Article Selection**

	N	% of Initial Articles	Reviewed	Reviewers
Level 1	14,999	100%	Title & Key Words	NHRC team
Level 2	4,497	30%	Abstract	NHRC team
Level 3	1,362	9.1%	Full Text	NHRC team
Level 4	979	6.5%	Full Text	264 SMEs



#### Results: Level of Evidence



Yablonsky, A. M., Martin, R.C., Highfill-McRoy, R. M., McAnany, J., Fitzmaurice, S., Lee, I., ... Rychnovsky, J. D. (2017)

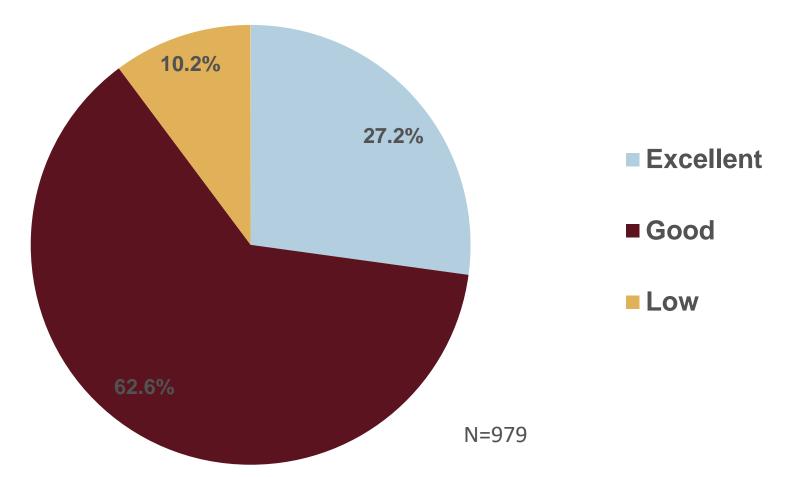


#### **Dimensions of Quality**

- 1. Conceptual Framing
  - Is a theoretical or conceptual framework mentioned?
- 2. Appropriateness
  - Is the descriptive information given appropriate for the project?
- 3. Transparency
  - Was the sample clearly described?
- 4. Validity
  - Did the study use valid instruments?
- 5. Reliability
  - Were data collected in a consistent way?
- 6. Cogency
  - Were study limitations addressed?



#### **Results: Quality**



Yablonsky, A. M., Martin, R.C., Highfill-McRoy, R. M., McAnany, J., Fitzmaurice, S., Lee, I., ... Rychnovsky, J. D. (2017)



#### Gender/Sex-Specific Health

- Limited research on gender specific research (Braun, et al, 2016; Yablonsky et al, 2017).
- Five Gender/Sex Specific topics (Yablonsky, 2017):
  - (1) pregnancy health,
  - (2) deployment and preventive health,
  - (3) sexually transmitted infections,
  - (4) family planning and contraceptive services
  - (5) sexual violations.



#### **Specific Scoping Reviews**

- Adjustment Disorders
- Breastfeeding
- Cervical Cancer
- Pregnancy, Childbirth, Postpartum
- Sexually Transmitted Infections
- Sleep
- Unintended Pregnancy



## WOMEN'S HEALTH SSUES

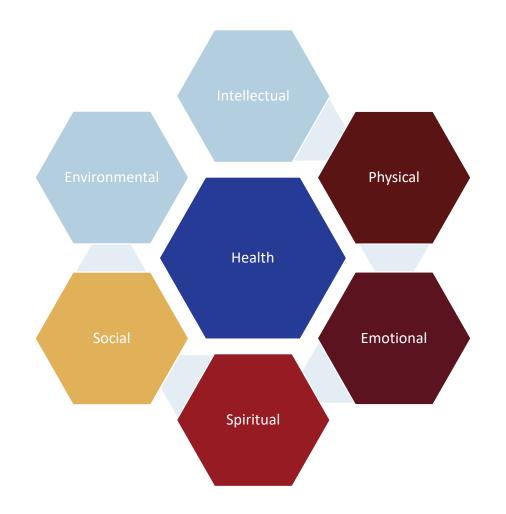
MILKEN INSTITUTE
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

JACOBS INSTITUTE
OF WOMEN'S HEALTH

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

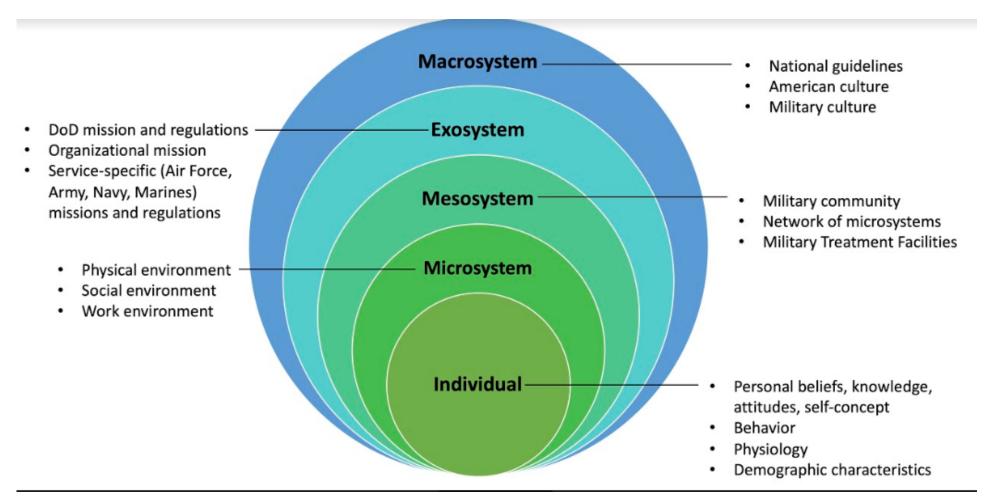


#### **Holistic Health**





## Social Ecological Model for Military Women's Health





#### **Adjustment Disorders**

- Final number articles (n = 29)
- The majority of studies were descriptive (cross-sectional) (25%), with no randomized control studies.
- Research or guidelines on recommendations for treatments is lacking
- Very few papers focused on health outcomes.



### Breastfeeding

- Final number articles (n=15)
- Eight research studies
- Key recommended areas for women's support:
  - Provide local support for lactation in the workplace through policy and leadership
  - Provide lactation expert support
  - Explore workplace toxic chemicals on the quality of breastmilk
  - Establish policies that promote maternal/infant bonding
  - Continued research is needed to promote healthy breastfeeding timeframe in infant growth

Trego, lobst, Best, and Smith, 2020



#### **Cervical Cancer**

- Final number articles (n=40)
- Focus of paper was on Risk, Prevention, Screening and Diagnosis, Treatment and Management categories of care
- Limited research to address women's health needs within a military context.
  - Deployments
  - Change of duty station
  - Human Papillomavirus vaccination strategies



## Pregnancy, Childbirth, Postpartum

- Final number of articles (n=84)
- Mostly research studies (n=76)
- Key recommended areas of support:
  - Workplace safety
  - Perinatal screening
  - Recognize mental health needs during pregnancy and postpartum
  - Maintenance of physical fitness during pregnancy and postpartum

Iobst, Smith, Best, Allard, and Trego, 2020



#### **Sexually Transmitted Infections**

- Final number of articles (n=56)
- Mostly research studies (n=47)
- Key recommended areas of support:
  - Develop interventions for women most at risk to include service men
  - Screening programs need to include men
  - Identify policies and programs that send incongruent messages about sexual activity versus safe sexual activity

Hopkins, Wilson, and Allard, 2020



### Sleep

- Final number of articles (n=17), all research
- No intervention studies found
- Key recommended areas of support:
  - Identify sex/gender differences
  - Risk factors following deployment
  - Limited information on sleep apnea presentation and severity
  - Pregnancy and postpartum sleep disorders



### **Unintended Pregnancy**

- Final number articles (n = 76)
- The active prevention of unintended pregnancy was the most common research articles reviewed (n = 40)
  - Epidemiologic
  - Identify women most at risk
  - Only two intervention studies
- Intervention studies need to explore pregnancy intentionality among military women

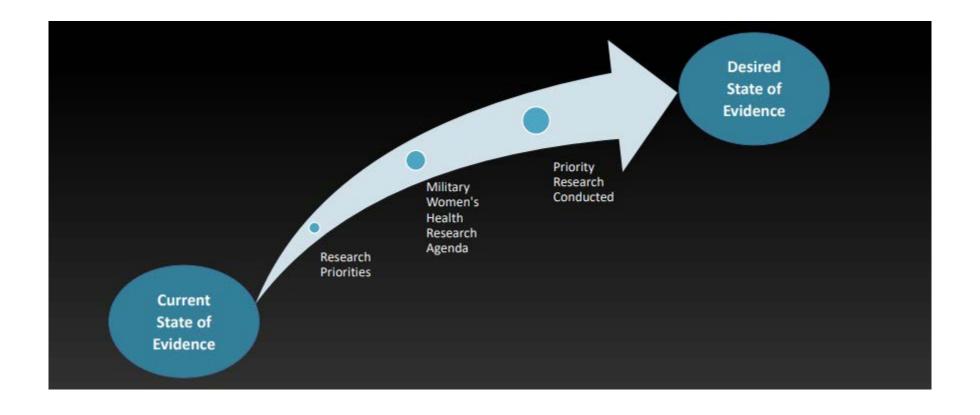


## Military Women's Health Research Interest Group (MWHRIG)

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## Delphi study (Trego, 2019)





## Delphi study (Trego, 2019)

- Top three topics ranked as #1 priority for military readiness:
  - Sexual assault
  - Genitourinary health
  - Behavioral health





#### **Future Health Care Needs**









#### **Space Health Needs**

**Gravity Fields** 

Isolation/Confinement

Hostile/Closed Environments

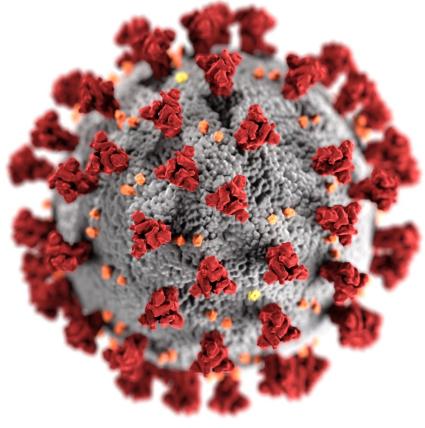
**Space Radiation** 

Distance from Earth

Quoted from: Abadie, Lloyd, Shelmamer, (2020)



How will COVID influence future military women's health research priorities?





# Five Ways the U.S. Military will Change after the Pandemic

Cyber and Space Will Be Higher Priorities Than Land, Sea, and Air

Reliance on Forward Defense Will Diminish

The Reserve Component Will Become Much More Important

Legacy Programs and End Strength Will Be Cut — By a Lot

The Prestige of the U.S. Military Will Be Dimmed

Quoted from: Barno and Bensahel, 2020



#### Summary

- A person's health is influenced throughout their lifespan by many factors such as sex, gender, racial ethnicity, culture, environment, and socioeconomic status.
- Advisory committees such as DACOWITS advice, inform and recommend policies on matters related to women's health and other aspects.
- Key areas of focus for women's health research are: Sexual assault, Genitourinary health,
   Behavioral health
- Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the US Military will see some changes, including changes in priorities of the use of resources, whether it be financial, manpower, research, etc.
- Sex- and gender-differences research to promote the health of women should be the funding priorities to meet the ever changing demands of military service.



#### Questions



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- Go to URL <a href="https://www.dhai7-cepo.com/">https://www.dhai7-cepo.com/</a>
- 2. Search for your course using the Catalog, Calendar, or Find a course search tool.
- Click on the REGISTER/TAKE COURSE tab.
  - If you have previously used the CEPO CMS, click login.
  - If you have not previously used the CEPO CMS click register to create a new account.
- 4. Follow the onscreen prompts to complete the post-activity assessments:
  - a. Read the Accreditation Statement
  - b. Complete the Evaluation
  - Take the Posttest
- 5. After completing the posttest at 80% or above, your certificate will be available for print or download.
- 6. You can return to the site at any time in the future to print your certificate and transcripts at https://www.dhai7-cepo.com/
- 7. If you require further support, please contact us at <a href="mailto:dha.ncr.i7.mbx.cepo-cms-support@mail.mil">dha.ncr.i7.mbx.cepo-cms-support@mail.mil</a>