



## **Defense Health Agency (DHA) Clinical Communities Speaker Series**

### **Resource List-January 2020**

#### **Advances in Women's Health:**

#### **Ensuring Medical Readiness of our Female Soldiers Prior to Deployment**

Despite increased attention to the evolving nature of war, the unique challenges of contemporary deployment, and women's changing role in warfare, few studies have examined differences in deployment stressors across eras of service or evaluated how gender differences in deployment experiences have changed over time. Using data collected from two national survey studies, the article [Understanding how Deployment Experiences Change Over Time: Comparison of Female and Male Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom \(OEF/OIF\) and Gulf War Veterans](#) examined war cohort and gender differences in veterans' reports of both mission-related and interpersonal stressors during deployment. Although OEF/OIF veterans reported more combat experiences and greater preparedness for deployment compared to Gulf War veterans, Gulf War veterans reported higher levels of other mission-related stressors, including difficult living and working environment, perceived threat, and potential exposure to nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. Gender differences also emerged, with men reporting greater exposure to mission-related stressors and women reporting higher levels of interpersonal stressors.

Reproductive-age women are a fast-growing component of active-duty military personnel who experience deployment and combat more frequently than previous service-era women Veterans. With the expansion of the number of women and their roles, the United States Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs have prioritized development and integration of reproductive services into their health systems. Thus, understanding associations between deployments or combat exposures and short- or long-term adverse reproductive health outcomes is imperative for policy and programmatic development. The article, [Impact of Deployment on Reproductive Health in United States Active-Duty Servicewomen and Veterans](#) concluded that the effect of deployment on mental and physical health is a large part of reproductive issues including sexual dysfunction and chronic pelvic pain.

Today women comprise 15% of the United States active-duty military, but are often overlooked in research of the Armed Forces. While some of the challenges faced by women are similar to men, they encounter unique stressors related to childcare while deployed, sexual harassment and assault, and gynecological needs. Women are also more likely than men to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Both stress and PTSD have been linked to the development of chronic hypertension and some adverse birth outcomes. The article, [Deployment, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Hypertensive Disorders of Pregnancy \(HDP\) among United States Active-Duty Military Women](#) went on to conclude that there was an elevated risk of HDP among the military population among women who deployed for a year or longer and for African American mothers more specifically.

The study, [A Female Urinary Diversion Device for Military Women in the Deployed Environment](#) explored the utility of a female urinary diversion device (FUDD) as a self-care measure for female urination in the deployment environment and to determine if there were differences in self-reported urinary symptoms between an intervention group and control group of deployed military women (MW). Results demonstrated that the FUDD was easy to use, store, and carry. Participants of the study recommended the FUDD and reported that there were many opportunities for use of a FUDD due to unsanitary and challenging conditions in deployed and training environments.



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### References

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