



Defense Health Agency (DHA) Clinical Communities Speaker Series

Resource List – January 2020

Advances in Women's Health

Recommendations and Initiatives in Women's Health from Select Agencies

Long-acting Reversible Contraceptives

[Intrauterine devices \(IUDs\) and contraceptive implants](#), also called long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARC), are effective contraceptive options for patient consideration. The major advantage of LARC, compared to other contraceptive methods, is that they do not require ongoing effort from the patient for long-term and effective use. Furthermore, should a patient be interested in conceiving, fertility can be quickly restored upon removal.

According to the Long-Acting Reversible Contraception Work Group, the IUDs currently marketed in the United States include the copper IUD and four levonorgestrel-releasing IUDs. These IUDs and the contraceptive implant can be routinely offered for nulliparous women and even adolescents. The American Academy of Pediatrics supports this position on safety and effectiveness. There are concerns in some patients that initiation of LARC can impact the ability to breastfeed. However, a systematic review has found that progestin-only contraceptives do not affect the ability to initiate nor sustain breastfeeding.

Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services

In April and May 2019, [DACOWITS](#) members visited eight different installations representative of the four Department of Defense branches (Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force) to hold focus groups on three specific topics. These include conscious and unconscious gender bias, pregnancy and parenthood and physical fitness assessments. There were a total of 48 focus groups, 24 comprised of men and the other half comprised of women. The participants were of evenly spread demographically, such as age, rank, ethnicity, marital status, etc.

After all of the answers were aggregated, the participants recommend the following: increased family support for service members, such as child care services and family care plan expectations, increased awareness of sabbaticals and alternative career paths, changes in caregiver policies, improving physical fitness assessments and standards, address housing issues and provide financial classes to service members.

Women in the U.S. Military

With the end of mandatory conscription in 1973 and the establishment of an all-volunteer force, it was noted that [Women are Joining the Military](#) in increasing numbers. In 2010, 14% of the enlisted force and 16% of the commissioned officers are women. When one considers demographics, there is more diversity amongst women than with men, and it is more likely than men for women to be unmarried; should a woman be married, there is a higher incidence that they are also married to a military member compared to men.

Compared to men, women are more likely to join the service during difficult economic times. However, the economy aside, women are joining because of their willingness to serve and receive education



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benefits. As with any conflict, reintegration after a deployment is difficult, regardless of gender. Women are reporting familial strains and increased irritability.

Veterans of Foreign Wars

The [Veterans of Foreign Wars \(VFW\)](#) of the United States is a nonprofit veterans service organization comprised of eligible veterans and military service members from the active, guard and reserve forces. The VFW was instrumental in establishing the Veterans Administration, development of the national cemetery system, in the fight for compensation for Vietnam vets exposed to Agent Orange and for veterans diagnosed with Gulf War Syndrome. Ensuring women veterans receive veterans' benefits and services that honor their brave military service is one of the VFW's top priorities. The VFW priority areas include women's health care, outreach and tackling issues of homelessness.

References

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