Defense Health Agency (DHA) Clinical Communities Speaker Series

Healthcare Innovation and Readiness: Empowering Change and Resilience in Global Care Delivery

2025 SEPT CCSS S05: Understanding and Assessing Military Environmental Exposures

Resource List

A Clinician's Guide to Occupational Exposures in the Military (2022) highlights that many current and former military personnel face respiratory risks from workplace and environmental exposures emphasizes that clinicians should ask about these exposures when taking medical histories. Emerging studies show growing associations between long-term burn pit exposure and lung diseases in veterans. The article urges healthcare providers to consider both recent and distant exposures to better identify health risks. Overall, it offers an overview of the types of exposures affecting service members and stresses the importance of a detailed exposure history in clinical care.

Reassessment of the Department of Veterans Affairs Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry (2022) explains how Congress directed the VA in 2013 to create the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit (AHOBP) Registry, which launched in 2014 as an online questionnaire for veterans and service members to record their deployment and exposure history. Over time, the registry expanded to include more eligible deployment locations and added new features like mobile access, data integration, and optional health evaluations. Despite these improvements, the registry has faced challenges. Feedback from veterans and service members showed that while some valued the registry to document exposures for health care and benefits, others found the purpose unclear, the questionnaire hard to navigate, and lacking provider outreach therefore highlights the important areas for future improvement.

Military Health Care: DOD and VA Could Benefit from More Information on Staff Use of Military Toxic Exposure Records reviews how the Individual Longitudinal Exposure Record (ILER) (2024) reviews how the Individual Longitudinal Exposure Record (ILER) is being used by staff from the Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as of November 2023. Users say ILER is helpful because it brings exposure and deployment information into one place, but some also find it hard to locate specific records. The GAO recommends that both agencies set clear goals and performance measures for ILER use by staff type and purpose, and then use that data to guide outreach, training, and ensure the tool serves all its intended uses.

Resources on Environmental Exposures for Military Veterans (2020) provides additional resources available about environmental exposures to servicemembers and veterans. It explains the different health registries and how to contact the local VA Environmental Health Coordinator. It also provides links to available resources for physicians to understand exposure-related concerns to better care and advocate for their patients.

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