



Defense Health Agency (DHA) Clinical Communities Speaker Series

2026 SEP CCSS: Mission Ready: Advancing Clinical Practices in Women's Health and Obstetrics

SEP CCSS S05: Female Chronic Pelvic Pain: Considerations for Military Servicewomen

Resource List

[Pelvic Floor Disorders Among U.S. Military Active-Duty Females](#) (2024) utilized the Medical Assessment and Readiness System at Womack Army Medical Center to analyze the prevalence, incidence, and risk factors of pelvic floor dysfunction (PFD) among 550,303 active-duty female service members from 2011 to 2022. The researchers identified an overall period prevalence of 6.00% and an incidence rate of 14.39 cases per 1,000 person-years, demonstrating that diagnosed pelvic floor disorders are actively increasing among both new and established military women. Beyond conventional clinical predictors such as age, obesity, and marital status, the study highlighted unique military-specific risk factors, including increasing time in military service (the strongest independent predictor), three or more deployments, and specific physical fitness scoring. These factors underscore the critical need for targeted pelvic floor health programs and early interventions to preserve individual health and sustain overall force readiness.

[Complementary Approaches for Military Women with Chronic Pelvic Pain](#) (2023) investigated the efficacy of two self-directed, six-week behavioral interventions—Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Healthy Lifestyle (HL)—on active-duty military women suffering from chronic pelvic pain at Mountain Home Air Force Base. While both interventions successfully lowered clinical depression scores, only the MBSR group experienced a statistically significant reduction in pain perception. Additionally, the study noted distinct biological impacts, with the MBSR group showing a decrease in pro-inflammatory cytokines and an increase in vascular endothelial growth factor, demonstrating that self-directed mindfulness not only relieves psychological distress but also physically down-regulates systemic inflammatory and pain pathways to support military readiness.

[Chronic Pelvic Pain](#) (2026) highlights that chronic pelvic pain (pain lasting more than 6 months in the lower abdomen, genital area, lower back, or thighs) is highly common among women Veterans. The Veterans Affairs (VA) webpage details that this pain is frequently caused by conditions like irritable bowel syndrome, endometriosis, interstitial cystitis, and pelvic floor dysfunction. Crucially, it notes that Veterans who have experienced military sexual trauma, combat trauma, or post-traumatic stress disorder are two to three times more likely to suffer from chronic pelvic pain than those without these traumatic experiences. To address these complex needs, the VA provides a comprehensive, multidisciplinary range of services—including primary care, specialized gynecology, physical therapy, and mental health support—aimed at improving Veterans' overall quality of life.

[Endometriosis](#) (2023) is a complex, chronic disease characterized by the growth of endometrium-like tissue outside of the uterus, causing inflammation, pain, and scar tissue formation. It affects approximately 10% (190 million) of reproductive-aged women globally, manifesting as severe menstrual pain, chronic pelvic pain, painful intercourse, and infertility. Currently, there is no cure for endometriosis, and diagnostic delays are common due to normalized pain and limited healthcare access, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Treatment primarily focuses on symptom management using hormonal therapies, pain medications, or surgical interventions. In response, the World Health Organization is actively partnering with global stakeholders to raise awareness, develop normative clinical guidance, and improve diagnostic and therapeutic care models worldwide.



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References

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