

Annual Report
Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses
December 1, 2008

1. Origin and Membership

The Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses was first appointed by former Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi on January 23, 2002, pursuant to Public Law 105-368. Further appointments were made by former Secretary of Veterans Affairs R. James Nicholson in 2005-2007, and by Secretary of Veterans Affairs James Peake in 2008. Committee members who served during 2008 are listed in Appendix A.

2. Committee Activities

The Committee held three meetings during 2008: April 7-8 in Boston, Massachusetts, and September 15-16 and November 17 in Washington, D.C. All meetings were open to the public. The April meeting featured presentations by researchers on gastrointestinal and blood hyper-coagulation problems in Gulf War veterans, and a discussion of the Gulf War illnesses (GWI) research program at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The September meeting centered on presentations of ongoing epidemiological studies by researchers funded by VA and the Department of Defense (DoD). The November meeting included a discussion of a research study on Gulf War pesticide applicators being conducted at Boston University and the formal presentation of the Committee's 2008 Report "Gulf War Illness and the Health of Gulf War Veterans" to Secretary of Veterans Affairs James Peake.

Research topics discussed in Committee meetings were addressed by multiple investigators in most areas. Representatives from VA, DoD, and other federal agencies were invited to attend the meetings and participate in discussions with presenting scientists along with Committee members. This structure has allowed Committee meetings to serve not only as forums for presenting the latest GWI research, but also as a

vehicle for advancing that research and disseminating current information to government and government-funded scientists. Meetings also featured regular updates on VA GWI administrative and scientific research activities and on additional published scientific research related to GWI. Time was also reserved to allow members of the public to provide comments on the Committee's work and on matters related to GWI.

Committee members have been active participants in all aspects of the Committee's work. Meetings have been well-attended. In addition, members have devoted substantial time to Committee business outside of meetings, particularly gathering information on the Gulf War illnesses research program at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center and the preparation of the Committee's 2008 Report.

The Committee has kept VA leadership and Office of Research and Development (ORD) informed of its work and its findings on an ongoing basis. This task has been accomplished through attendance and participation of ORD officials at Committee meetings, and ongoing communications between the Committee chairman, scientific director and scientific coordinator, and the Secretary and ORD.

3. Support Activities

Responsibility for providing scientific and administrative support to the Committee has been assumed by the Department of Environmental Health of the Boston University School of Public Health, through a contract with the Bedford, Massachusetts VAMC. Committee member Dr. Roberta White currently serves as Scientific Director, and Dr. Kimberly Sullivan serves as Scientific Coordinator. In addition to ongoing activities relating to monitoring research relating to GWI, preparation of Committee reports, and development of Committee meetings, the staff has primary responsibility for Committee administrative activities and management of the Committee's website.

4. Designated Federal Officer

The Designated Federal Officer for the Committee is William Goldberg, PhD, who also serves as manager for the GWI portfolio within the VA Office of Research and Development. Dr. Goldberg's joint role has facilitated regular communications between the Committee and ORD.

5. Accomplishments

The Committee produced two major reports in 2008. In April, following a detailed review and discussion, the Committee prepared extensive findings and recommendations related to the VA-funded Gulf War illnesses research program at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center.

In November, the Committee delivered a 452-page report, "Gulf War Illness and the Health of Gulf War Veterans," a comprehensive analysis of all relevant scientific studies and reports to date, and recommendations for future research. It recommended that highest priority be given to the identification of treatments to improve the health of ill Gulf War veterans and to prevent similar problems in future deployments.

The report concludes:

"Veterans of the 1990-1991 Gulf War had the distinction of serving their country in a military operation that was a tremendous success, achieved in short order. But many had the misfortune of developing lasting health consequences that were poorly understood and for too long, denied or trivialized. The extensive body of scientific research now available consistently indicates that Gulf War illness is real, that it is the result of neurotoxic exposures during Gulf War deployment, and that few veterans have recovered or substantially improved with time. Addressing the serious and persistent health problems affecting 175,000 veterans remains the obligation of the federal government and all who are indebted to the military men and women who risked their lives in Iraq,

Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia 17 years ago. This obligation is made more urgent by the length of time Gulf War veterans have waited for answers and assistance.”

Appendix A
Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses
2008 Committee Members

Chairman

James H. Binns, former Chairman, Parallel Design, Inc.; former Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense; Phoenix, Arizona.

Committee Members

Carrolee Barlow, MD, PhD, Vice President Biology Research, Brain Cells, Inc., San Diego, California.

Floyd E. Bloom, MD, Professor Emeritus, Molecular and Integrative Neuroscience Department, The Scripps Research Institute, La Jolla, California.

Dedra S. Buchwald, MD, Professor of Medicine, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington.

Daniel J. Clauw, MD, Assistant Dean for Clinical and Translation Research and Professor of Medicine, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Beatrice A. Golomb, MD, PhD, Associate Professor of Medicine and of Family Preventative Medicine, University of California at San Diego, La Jolla, California.

Joel C. Graves, hospice chaplain and Captain, U.S. Army (Retired); 1990-1991 Gulf War veteran, Lacey, Washington.

Anthony Hardie, Executive Assistant, Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs; 1990-1991 Gulf War veteran, Madison, Wisconsin.

Marguerite L. Knox, MN, NP, Senior Sales Representative, Teva Neuroscience; 1990-1991 Gulf War veteran, Hopkins, South Carolina.

William J. Meggs, MD, PhD, Professor and Chief, Division of Toxicology, The Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina.

Mary D. Nettleman, MD, MS, Chair, Department of Medicine, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.

James P. O'Callaghan, PhD, Head of Molecular Neurotoxicology, Toxicology and Molecular Biology Branch, Health Effects Laboratory Division, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-NIOSH, Morgantown, West Virginia.

Steve Smithson, Deputy Director for Claims Services, The American Legion; 1990-1991 Gulf War veteran, Washington, D.C.

Lea Steele, PhD, Adjunct Associate Professor, College of Human Ecology, Kansas State University, Topeka, Kansas.

Adam Such, Lieutenant Colonel, United States Army, Executive Officer, 5th Special Forces Group, Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

Roberta White, PhD, Chair and Professor, Department of Environmental Health, Boston University School of Public Health; Scientific Director, Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses, Boston, Massachusetts.

Consultant to the Committee

Jack Melling, PhD, Consultant to the United States Government Accountability Office, Salisbury, United Kingdom.