Health Affairs
Briefing to DACOWITS

Cara J. Krulewitch CNM PhD FACNM

Director, Women's Health, Medical Ethics and Patient Advocacy

Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs)

Health Services Policy & Oversight

September, 2015

DACOWITS Questions

- What does the medical community recommend regarding postpartum operational deferment?
- How do the pregnancy, postpartum, and breastfeeding policies in the military differ from those of the civilian sector?
- Does the medical community's current research and recommendations align with the DoD and the Services policies?
- What policy and/or programs exist to ensure servicewomen are not exposed to reproductive or lactation hazards?
- What specific forms are used to document pregnancy for servicewomen?
  - What specific terminology is used to indicate pregnancy?
  - Who are these forms sent to? Who has access to these forms?
  - How are miscarriages or abortions documented on these forms (terminology)? Who has access to this information?
- DoD Instruction 1342.19 states, *"Military mothers of newborns shall receive a 4-month deferment from duty away from the home station for the period immediately following the birth of a child;"* whereas, DoD Directive 1308.1 states, *"Pregnant Service members shall not be held to the standards of fitness and body fat testing until at least six months after pregnancy termination."*
  - Why are postpartum servicewomen eligible to serve in a deployable operational unit/command prior to completing a fitness test?
  - What is the methodology preventing these two polices from being aligned?

Medical Community Recommendations

Aside from American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations for 6 months of exclusive breastfeeding, there are no evidence-based recommendations to inform a recommendation on operational deferment postpartum

Military vs Civilian Policies on Pregnancy, Post-Partum and Breastfeeding

- No evidence-based civilian policies available
- Recommendations from American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), breastfeed a minimum of 6 months
- Military, 4 months minimum deployment deferment, 6 months deferment for PT testing
  - All Services meet or exceed these recommendations (See June presentations from Services)

Medical Community Evidence and DoD/Service Policies

- No cohesive evidence-based policy for maternity leave, pregnancy leave.
- 2008 USPSTF—includes care that promotes breastfeeding
- There is no US medical community consensus on what constitutes appropriate maternity leave

Policy/Programs Related to Environmental Exposures and Pregnancy/Lactation

- Standard of care questions for all OB providers
- Although there are no specific policies related to pregnancy/lactation there are DoD policies that assure that environmental exposures are addressed in a health context for all Active Duty Service Members:
  - DoDI 6055.05 “Occupational and Environmental Health (OEH)”, 11 Nov 08
  - DoDD 4715.1E “Environment, Safety and Occupational Health (ESOH), 19 Mar 05
  - DoDI 6490.03 “Deployment Health”, 30 Sep 11
  - DoDD 6490.02E “Comprehensive Health Surveillance” 21 Oct 04
  - DoDI 6055.08 “Occupational Ionizing Radiation Protection Program” 15 Dec 09

Forms

- No OSD-level form, each Service has a limitation of duty form—varies if pregnancy is mentioned and it is given to the Service member
- There are no HA policies on the forms that are used for pregnancy/pp.
- If hospitalized during pregnancy or for delivery, discharge forms and follow-up recommendations are given to patient
- Request for Service-specific information pending

Postpartum Deployment versus Fitness

- Must keep concepts separate
  - Fitness testing relates physical body measures
    - Research suggests postpartum weight loss occurs up to 12 months, but most research stops at 6 months
  - Deployment postpartum tied to family support and bonding, physiologic involution and readiness
    - Uterine involution and restoration of pre-pregnant physiology at 6 weeks
    - There is little research on bonding and deployment
    - Must be medically cleared to deploy

Discussion of Policies on Postpartum Deployment vs Fitness

- Fitness and postpartum deployment policies are intended for different purposes
- Alignment may potentially prevent some Service women who are prepared to deploy at an earlier time from doing so
- Fitness to deploy is medically determined and not related to fitness testing

QUESTIONS?