



# **DACOWITS RFI #6**

**Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED)**

**Office of Women's Health (OWH)**

**December 2024**



# DACOWITS RFI #6

## PERIMENOPAUSE, MENOPAUSE, AND HORMONAL IMBALANCE ISSUES

**RFI 6a):** *What Department of Defense and Service-specific research has been conducted or is ongoing that focuses on perimenopause (the menopausal transition), menopause, and hormonal imbalance issues servicewomen confront? If none, is any future research or study planned?*

### **Response:**

- Currently USN and USMC have no ongoing research
- Military Women's Health Research Initiative spearheaded by the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS)
- Navy established the Navy Women's Initiative Team
  - Exploring menopause research and support as a future line of effort.



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**RFI 6b):** *What policies and medical protocols exist to assist Service women undergoing perimenopause, menopause, and/or hormonal imbalance issues?*

### **Response:**

- Established VA/DoD working group to develop menopause-specific Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPG)
- BUMED OWH medical protocols for providers and patient resources regarding perimenopause and menopause.
  - Completed: *The Information for Service Women: Perimenopause and Menopause Guide* <sup>2</sup>
  - In development:
    - *Neuromusculoskeletal Implications of Menopause and Perimenopause*
    - *Educational Resource on Mental Health Effects of Perimenopause and Menopause*
    - *Hormone Replacement Therapies for Perimenopause and Menopause: Provider Guide*



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**RFI 6c):** *What research has been done to assess whether Service women may experience earlier or more severe onset of these conditions as a result of military service and/or exposure to uniquely military environments, such as hazardous conditions, lengthy deployments, combat stresses, hazardous materials, and extended high altitude or undersea exposure?*

### **Response:**

- Currently USN and USMC have no ongoing research
- Civilian research
  - The potential impact of Military Sexual Trauma on menopause and mental health outcomes in women Veterans
  - The possible influences of environmental exposures and post-traumatic stress disorder on menopause among Veterans.<sup>3,4,5</sup>



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**RFI 6d):** *Do any health surveys of Service women have any questions related to perimenopause, menopause, and hormonal imbalance issues for women? If so, what are the questions and what are the results?*

### Response:

- The 2022 RAND Women’s Reproductive Health Survey
  - Included option to indicate ‘No, I am menopausal or postmenopausal’ when responding to the question ‘Currently, are you using any form of birth control?’
  - Results did not reveal how many respondents selected this option<sup>6</sup>
- The Navy’s Health of the Force (HoF) survey - women’s health **questions** every other year
  - The 2024 Service women...
    - Asked to evaluate their comfort level being evaluated for a women’s health issue by their primary care providers
    - Provided a free response section regarding medical care experiences
    - Provided space to “elaborate on any conditions or circumstances when you were unable to access specialty care and what steps the Navy could take to mitigate difficulties”
  - One 2022 survey response: “Recommend more OB/GYN training for primary care physicians that INCLUDES menopausal care to enable quicker and more effective care for female service members.”<sup>7</sup>



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**RFI 6e):** *What is the incidence of onset of perimenopause, menopause, and hormonal imbalance issues in Service women by age, race, and ethnicity?*

### **Response:**

- Defer to the DHA for the data
- Civilian data
  - Demonstrated differences in Black and Hispanic women
  - Psychosocial stress was predictive of an earlier menopause in black and Hispanic women
  - Racial disparities in Hormone imbalances and diagnosis of certain conditions caused by hormone imbalance
    - Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS)
    - Primary Ovarian Insufficiency (POI)
    - Endocrine disrupting chemicals
    - Uterine fibroids <sup>8,9,10,11,12</sup>



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**RFI 6f):** *Provide data on the number and percent of Service women who have been treated for perimenopause, menopause, and hormonal imbalance issues in the last five years (2018-2023)?*

**Response:**

- Defer to the DHA for the data
- The BUMED OWH collaborates routinely with the DHA



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**RFI 6g):** *What menopausal-specific training is provided to health care providers? Both general/primary care and women's health specialty providers?*

### **Response:**

- Providers initially receive training during their medical education
  - Varies by educational institution
  - Varies by specialty
- Providers able to refer Service members to specialty care if needed
- The Uniformed Services University for the Health Science is currently updating and expanding menopause related curriculum
- BUMED OWH creating additional resources on menopause and perimenopause information for health care providers
  - *Caring for Service Women During Menopause and Perimenopause*
  - *Hormone Replacement Therapies for Perimenopause and Menopause: Provider Guide.*





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**RFI 6h):** *Are health care providers trained sufficiently to recognize and diagnose the onset of perimenopause, menopause, and hormonal imbalance issues in Service women? Particularly in cases of unusually early onset?*

### **Response:**

- Providers initially receive training during their medical education
- Nationally recognized gaps in medical education's menopause training
- Clinical Practice Guidelines and updated Graduate Medical Education will better equip healthcare providers to care for patients
- BUMED OWH
  - 2023 Virtual Women's Health Seminar included a training session on menopause and perimenopause
  - Exploring plans to hold future recurring Women's Health Seminars to continually enhance providers' knowledge and capability for providing high quality women's health care



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**RFI 6i):** *What pharmacological treatment options (e.g., hormone therapy, vaginal estrogen, gabapentin, and low-dose antidepressants) are available in Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) to support perimenopause and menopause?*

### **Response:**

- Pharmacologic treatment options available to Service members through the TRICARE pharmacy benefit
- Treatment recommendations individualized to each patient's symptoms, health history, and treatment goals
- Some pharmacologic treatment options include:
  - Contraception
  - Vaginal estrogen
  - Hormone therapy
  - Antidepressants



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**RFI 6j):** *What complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) options, for symptom management, are available in MTFs to support perimenopause and menopause?*

### **Response:**

- Service members referred for additional care and services to aid symptom management and optimize health during menopause
  - Mental Health
  - Smoking Cessation
  - Nutrition/Dietician
- Providers may recommend herbal therapies (such as soy, pollen extract, black cohosh, or ginseng) to reduce symptoms and should discuss the risks, benefits, and evidence to support use
- Service members utilize resources beyond MTFs via Navy Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR), Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS), Fleet and Family Support Programs (FFSP), and Military OneSource
  - Fitness coaching
  - Yoga
  - Strength Training
  - Non-clinical counseling
  - Stress Management



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**RFI 6k):** *How are Service women receiving information and counseling about perimenopause, menopause, and hormonal imbalance issues?*

### **Response:**

- Female Force Readiness Summit hosted by the BUMED OWH in May 2024
  - Identified need to focus on menopause
  - Resulted in new BUMED OWH patient education materials
    - *Information for Service Women: Perimenopause and Menopause Guide* (published)
    - *Neuromusculoskeletal Implications of Menopause and Perimenopause* (in development)
    - *Mental Health Effects of Perimenopause and Menopause* (in development)
- BUMED OWH
  - Promotes resources during various Service and leadership symposiums, women's health fairs, social medial posts, and other events throughout the year
  - Collaboratively works with DHA and Tri-Service medical components to educate Service members



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### References:

1. [Text - H.R.7596 - 118th Congress \(2023-2024\): Servicewomen and Veterans Menopause Research Act | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#)
2. [Information for Service Women Perimenopause and Menopause Guide](#)
3. [Military Sexual Trauma and Menopause Symptoms Among Midlife Women's Veterans](#)
4. [War Related Illness and Injury Study Center](#)
5. [Exploring the Possible Link between PTSD and Early Menopause](#)
6. [The Women's Reproductive Health Survey \(WRHS\) of Active Duty Service Members | RAND](#)
7. [Health of the Force- Defense Centers for Public Health – Aberdeen](#)
8. [Menopause hormone therapy and complementary alternative medicine, quality of life, and racial/ethnic differences: the Study of Women's Health Across the Nation \(SWAN\) - PubMed](#)
9. [Racial and Ethnic Differences in the PCOS Metabolic Phenotype](#)
10. [Primary Ovarian Insufficiency](#)
11. [Hormonal Activity in commonly used Black hair care products](#)
12. [Racial disparities in uterine fibroids and endometriosis](#)
13. [2022 Demographics Profile of the Military Community](#)
14. [Virtual Women's Health Seminar](#)