Health Issues of Deployed Military Women

Presentation for DACOWITS Meeting, March 1

Objectives

The health and well-being of Service members is a key factor in force readiness.

- Provide DACOWITS with information about the health issues of deployed military women
- Identify how such health issues are addressed
- Discuss what remains to be done

Sources of Information

- Data on women's health issues is not routinely reported on Service or Department of Defense wide levels
- A key potential source of information on deployed women's health issues is healthcare encounter data. This data may be accessed via:
  - By-request reports
  - Existing health care encounter database(s)
- Special focus surveillance analyses and reports

Health Affairs (HA) Response: Special Focus Report

- The October 2009 issue of the Medical Surveillance Monthly Report (MSMR) produced by the Armed Forces health Surveillance Center (AFHSC) focused on the unique health issues of women in combat environments
- The AFHSC was established by the Deputy Secretary of Defense in February 2008 to unify several strategic Department of Defense (DoD) health surveillance assets and develop additional capabilities in a single organization
- The AFHSC provides timely, relevant, actionable, and comprehensive health surveillance information in order to promote, maintain, and enhance the health of military and military-associated populations

Identified Health Issues

- The goal of the AFHSC analysis was to identify and characterize the illnesses and injuries that occurred at higher than expected rates among females who deployed to OEF/OIF within two years of returning from deployment
- Conditions with consistently high incidence rates among females included:
  - Migraine
  - Disorders of the neck and back
  - Anxiety, depression, mood, and other mental disorders
  - Upper respiratory illnesses
  - Pregnancy, labor, delivery and fertility-related conditions
  - Medical treatments related to routine care that was probably deferred during deployment

How Are These Issues Being Addressed?

VOL. 16 • NO. 10
OCTOBER 2009

MSMR

A publication of the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center

MEDICAL SURVEILLANCE MONTHLY REPORT

WOMEN'S DEPLOYMENT HEALTH ISSUE:

Health of women after deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom, active component, U.S. Armed Forces ____ 2

Medical evacuation for suspected breast cancer, active and reserve components, U.S. Armed Forces, January 2002-June 2009 ____ 10

Policy brief: Department of Defense vaccine guidance for novel H1N1 influenza ____ 14

Surveillance Snapshot: Hospitalization rates for hepatitis A ____ 15

Summary tables and figures

Deployment health assessments update ____ 16

Sentinel reportable medical events, service members and beneficiaries, U.S. Armed Forces, cumulative numbers through September of 2008 and 2009 ____ 18

Acute respiratory disease, basic training centers, U.S. Army, October 2007-October 2009 ____ 23

Deployment-related conditions of special surveillance interest ____ 24

Read the MSMR online at http://www.afhsc.mil

- Health issues are addressed by the individual through the Military health System
- More detailed analyses are indicated to identify the natures, scopes, and effects of and potential countermeasures against deployment-related threats to the long term health of female service members.

What Remains to be Done?

- Request the establishment of an interagency Work Group comprised of key stakeholders within the DoD and VA research, clinical, and educational domains that focus on healthcare issues for Service women and Veterans.
- Work Group can identify issues leveraging collaborative research initiatives currently in-progress by the DoD and VA.
- The Work Group will create value by achieving improvement in outcomes through research, clinical, and educational activities.