



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
Media Relations

Washington, DC 20420
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www.va.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Jan. 15, 2015

VA Announces the Appointment of New Members to Advisory Council

Gulf War-Related Brain Cancer Study Also Announced

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is announcing the appointment of new members to the Research Advisory Committee (RAC) on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses.

VA will appoint Stephen L. Hauser, MD as committee chair for a term through September, 2016. Dr. Hauser is the Robert A. Fishman Distinguished Professor and Chair of the Department of Neurology at the University of California, San Francisco. A neuroimmunologist, Dr. Hauser's research has advanced the understanding of the genetic basis, immune mechanisms and treatment of multiple sclerosis.

Additional appointees include Ronnie D. Horner, PhD, who is a Professor of Epidemiology in the Department of Health Services Policy and Management at the Arnold School of Public Health, University of South Carolina; Frances E. Perez-WilHITE, a former US Army Officer who served as a Lieutenant in Desert Shield in 1990; and Scott S. Young, MD, a former Navy flight surgeon during the Gulf War, who currently heads Kaiser Permanente's Care Management Institute, an organization dedicated to creating and supporting high quality care delivery programs. These new members will serve terms through September 2017.

"VA is incredibly excited about the fresh perspective these new members will bring to the RAC, and we will continue to invest in research to understand and treat Gulf War Veterans' illnesses," said Secretary McDonald.

VA will also begin a study to examine brain cancer in Gulf War Veterans. The formation of the study was prompted by a discussion between VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald and members of the RAC. The members expressed concerns over the possible association between exposure to chemical nerve agents and brain cancer in Gulf War Veterans.

"Formation of this workgroup of VA subject matter experts to study research literature on the incidence of brain cancer in Gulf War Veterans is the latest VA effort on their behalf," said Secretary McDonald.

Some Veterans may have been exposed to chemical weapon agents during the demolition of the munitions depot in Khamisiyah, Iraq, in March 1991 after the Gulf War ceasefire. VA expects to complete the brain cancer study by the spring.

The RAC was established by section 104 of Public Law 105-368 to provide advice to VA on proposed research studies, research plans or research strategies relating to the health consequences of military service in the Southwest Asia theater of operations during the 1990-1991 Gulf War (Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm). The Committee periodically releases reports that summarize and make recommendations regarding research on the health of Gulf War Veterans.

Information about the Khamisiyah munitions depot can be found at http://www.gulflink.osd.mil/library/kham_info.jsp. Information about RAC is available at <http://www.va.gov/RAC-GWVI/>.

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