

**Annual Report**  
**Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses**  
**December 1, 2011**

1. Origin and Membership

The Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses was established pursuant to Public Law 105-368. Members are appointed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Committee members who served during 2011 are listed in Appendix A.

2. Committee Activities

The Committee's Operations Plan for 2011 focused on assisting VA to develop a new comprehensive research program to improve the health of Gulf War veterans. Following the discovery that the program needed more development than anticipated, this mission expanded to require the full attention of the Committee in 2011.

The Committee held two meetings in 2011: February 28-March 1 and June 27-28 in Washington, D.C. A third meeting scheduled for November was deferred to January, 2012, so that it can be held jointly with the VA Gulf War Steering Committee and the VA National Research Advisory Council to consider a strategic plan for VA Gulf War research. Ten members of the Committee and its associate scientific director volunteered to serve on the working groups that have developed the strategic plan, including five who served on two groups and four who served as convener of their group. In addition, three Committee members also served on the Gulf War Steering Committee. The information that was originally planned to be included in a scientific report updating the Committee's past research recommendations has been incorporated into the draft strategic plan.

The February meeting was held on the twentieth anniversary of the ceasefire that ended the Gulf War, to commemorate the service of Gulf War veterans and highlight the continuing importance of research to address the chronic multisymptom illness that

afflicts one in four. The meeting included statements by veteran Committee members who served in the war, representatives of major Veterans Service Organizations, and Mr. John Gingrich, Chief of Staff of the Department of Veterans Affairs. VA researchers presented their program to address the health consequences of Gulf War service.

The Committee welcomed many of the studies presented but identified major weaknesses in the program, which had not previously been submitted to the Committee or the VA Gulf War Steering Committee. It recommended that the implementation of major aspects of the program be suspended until a comprehensive strategic research plan was prepared, as previously recommended by the Committee.

A draft strategic plan prepared by ORD staff was presented to the Committee at its June meeting, and there was further discussion of VA's current research program. The Committee commended VA for initiating the planning process and recommended that the strategic plan be expanded and revised by working groups made up of VA staff and outside expert advisors, as proposed by Dr. Maximillian Buja, chairman of the Gulf War Steering Committee. The meeting also addressed altered immune functions in Gulf War illness and potential therapies, bringing together leading scientists in this area from VA, NIH, and outside universities.

Representatives from VA, DoD, and other federal agencies were invited to attend Committee meetings and participate in discussions with presenting scientists along with Committee members. All meetings were open to the public. Time was reserved to allow members of the public to provide comments on the Committee's work and on matters related to Gulf War research.

Committee members have been active participants in all aspects of the Committee's work. Meetings have been well-attended. As noted above, members have devoted substantial time to Committee business outside of meetings.

The Committee has kept VA leadership and the 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 associate scientific director, and the Secretary's Office and ORD.

3. Support Activities

Responsibility for providing scientific and administrative support to the Committee was provided by the Boston University School of Public Health, Department of Environmental 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 Associate Scientific Director. In addition to ongoing activities relating to monitoring research relating to GWI, preparation of Committee reports, development of Committee meetings, and preparation of meeting minutes, 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 Dr. William Goldberg, PhD, who also served as manager for the Gulf War portfolio within the VA Office of Research and Development until the appointment of Dr. Victor Kalasinski, PhD, who assumed responsibility for this portfolio in August.

5. Accomplishments

As of this writing, the draft sections produced by the strategic plan working groups are being assembled for discussion and review at a joint meeting January 31, 2012 of the Committee, the VA Gulf War Steering Committee, and the VA National Research Advisory Council. It appears likely that for the first time VA will soon have a comprehensive strategic plan to provide the foundation for an effective Gulf War research program.

The Committee Charter requires that the Committee measure federal Gulf War research against the standard of whether it has improved the health of Gulf War veterans.

Two treatment pilot studies concluded in 2011 showed statistically significant improvement in some symptoms of Gulf War multisymptom illness. These two studies included a VA-sponsored study of Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) by Dr. Mohammad Amin of the Northport, NY VAMC, and a DOD/CDMRP-sponsored study of Coenzyme Q10 supplementation by Dr. Beatrice Golomb of the University of California San Diego.

These studies are not cures and need to be replicated in larger samples. However, they are encouraging signs that the Institute of Medicine 2010 Gulf War and Health report is correct in recommending “a renewed research effort with substantial commitment to well-organized efforts to better identify and treat multisymptom illness in Gulf War veterans.” In his preface to the report, Dr. Stephen Hauser, chairman of the IOM committee, emphasized the need “to speed the development of effective treatments, cures, and, it is hoped, preventions. . . . [W]e believe that, through a concerted national effort and rigorous scientific input, answers can likely be found.”

**Appendix A**  
**Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses**  
**2011 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.

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, Anglican priest and Captain, U.S. Army (Retired), 1990-1991 Gulf War veteran, Lacey, Washington.

Anthony Hardie, 1990-1991 Gulf War veteran, Madison, Wisconsin.

Marguerite L. Knox, MN, NP, LTC South Carolina National Guard Medical Command, 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.

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.

Lea Steele, PhD, Professor, Institute of Biomedical Studies, Baylor, University, Waco, Texas

Adam Such, Managing Director, Reliant Global Solutions, Lieutenant Colonel, United States Army (Retired), Chandler, Arizona

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.