

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
CHARTER OF THE
RESEARCH ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON
GULF WAR VETERANS' ILLNESSES

A. OFFICIAL DESIGNATION: Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses (RAC-GWVI).

B. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF ACTIVITY: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses shall provide advice and make recommendations to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on proposed research plans and strategies related to understanding and treating 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 shall not conduct scientific research or review research proposals submitted to VA prior to funding. VA may, however, request individual Committee members with appropriate scientific expertise to participate in the review of such proposals.

The guiding principle for the work of the Committee shall be the premise that the fundamental goal of Gulf War-related government research, either basic or applied, is to ultimately improve the health of ill Gulf War veterans, and that the choice and success of research efforts shall be judged accordingly. The Committee shall assess the overall effectiveness of government research to answer central questions on the nature, causes, and treatments for health consequences of military service in the Southwest Asia theater of operations during the 1990-1991 Gulf War.

The Committee shall meet in public session to review all relevant funded research, investigations, and processes for funding research conducted previously and assess their methods, results, and implications. The Committee shall review all proposed Federal research plans, initiatives, procurements, grant programs, and other activities in support of research projects on health consequences of military service in the Southwest Asia theater of operations during the 1990-1991 Gulf War. The Committee, consistent with law, shall have access to all VA documents and other sources of information it finds relevant to such review.

C. PERIOD OF TIME NECESSARY FOR THE COMMITTEE TO CARRY OUT ITS PURPOSE: The Committee was established in compliance with statutory instructions contained in § 104 of Public Law 105-368. It has no termination date.

D. OFFICIAL TO WHOM THE COMMITTEE REPORTS: The Committee shall report to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

E. OFFICE RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING THE NECESSARY SUPPORT TO THE COMMITTEE: The Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs will provide support for the Committee. A VA employee shall be the Designated

Federal Officer. Technical support for the Committee shall be provided by a staff that reports to the Committee chair, who may appoint a technical director for the staff to supervise its operation. Staff members may be VA employees, employees of other government agencies, or independent agents employed as temporary VA employees.

F. DUTIES OF THE COMMITTEE: The Committee shall provide to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, not later than December 1 of each year, an annual report summarizing its activities for the preceding year. The Committee is authorized to develop additional reports and recommendations regarding relevant research. During its review of such research and in compliance with governing law, the Committee shall have access to all VA documents and other information sources it finds relevant to such review. Recommendations contained within a formal Committee report shall be submitted to the Secretary and other appropriate officials, as directed by the Secretary. All such reports shall be approved by the Committee, meeting in open public session, prior to submission to the Secretary.

The Secretary shall, to the extent provided by law, seek support from other Federal departments and agencies to provide the Committee with information and research findings it may require for purposes of carrying out its functions. To augment the expertise of the Committee, the Secretary may, at the request of the chair of the Committee, contract through VA for the services of non-governmental consultants who may prepare reports and background papers or prepare other materials for consideration by the Committee, as appropriate.

The Committee shall be comprised of members of the general public, including Gulf War veterans, representatives of such veterans, and members of the medical and scientific communities representing appropriate disciplines such as, but not limited to, biomedicine, epidemiology, immunology, environmental health, neurology, and toxicology.

Members shall be appointed for two- or three-year terms. The Secretary may renew the terms of members. The Secretary shall appoint the chair of the Committee. The term of office for the chair shall be two years, also renewable by the Secretary. The Committee will be composed of approximately fifteen (15) members. Several members may be Regular Government Employees (RGE), but the majority of the Committee's membership will be Special Government Employees (SGE).

The Committee may establish subcommittees to carry out specific projects or assignments. The Committee chair shall notify the Secretary, through the Designated Federal Officer for the Committee, upon the establishment of any subcommittee, including its function, membership and estimated duration.

The Secretary may establish a panel of experts representing appropriate medical and scientific disciplines to assist the Committee in its work. Panelists may be called on by the Secretary for advice and consultation, and may advise the Committee on research or conduct other appropriate activities for the Committee, at the request of the

Committee chair. Panelists shall report directly to the chair or such Committee members designated by the chair, but they shall not be members of the Committee. Panelists will be nominated by the Committee chair and appointed by the Secretary.

G. ESTIMATED ANNUAL OPERATING COSTS IN DOLLARS AND STAFF-YEARS:

The estimated annual cost for operating the Committee and its support staff is \$400,000 and 4 FTE. All members will receive travel expenses and a per diem allowance in accordance with the Federal Travel Regulation for any travel made in connection with their participation in Committee meetings.

H. ESTIMATED NUMBER AND FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS: The Committee is expected to meet not less than twice annually. Meetings of the subcommittee(s) shall be convened as necessary. The Designated Federal Officer (DFO), a full time VA employee, will approve the schedule of Committee meetings. The DFO or a designee will be present at all meetings, and each meeting will be conducted in accordance with an agenda approved by the DFO. The DFO is authorized to adjourn any meeting when he or she determines it is in the public interest to do so.

I. COMMITTEE TERMINATION DATE: None.

J. DATE CHARTER IS FILED:

APPROVED: James B. Peake, M.D.
Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Date: 05/08/08