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Washington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
www.va.gov

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VA's voluntary research genetics program reaches major milestone with 750,000 Veteran partners

WASHINGTON — In its journey to improve the lives of Veterans through health care research and innovation, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently reached a major milestone with enrollment of its 750,000th Veteran partner in the Million Veteran Program (MVP) — a national, **voluntary** research initiative that helps VA study how genes affect the health of Veterans.

The milestone, which was reached April 18, is the result of years of outreach, recruitment and enrollment efforts to help to bring precision medicine to the forefront of VA health care.

“While having 750,000 Veteran partners is a momentous achievement, there is still much work to be done,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “MVP is on track to continue the march to 1 million Veteran partners and beyond in the next few years.”

From its first enrollees in 2011, the program has successfully expanded into one of the largest, most robust research cohorts of its kind in the world. MVP was designed to help researchers understand how genes affect health and illness. Having a better knowledge of a person's genetic makeup may help to prevent illness and improve treatment of disease.

The enrollment milestone is significant because as more participants enroll, researchers have a more representative sample of the entire Veteran population to help improve health care for everyone. Enrollees in the program include Veterans from all 50 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico and Guam. MVP also has the largest representation of minorities of any genomic cohort in the U.S.

Research using MVP data is already underway with several studies, including efforts focused on understanding the genetics of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), diabetes, heart disease, suicide prevention and other topics. Several significant research findings have already been published in high-impact scientific journals. The knowledge gained from research can eventually lead to better treatments and preventive measures for many common illnesses, especially those common among combat Veterans, such as PTSD.

MVP will continue to grow its informatics infrastructure and expand its partner base, to include Veterans beyond those enrolled in VA care. VA is also working on a collaboration with the Department of Defense (DoD) to make MVP enrollment available to DoD beneficiaries, including active-duty service members.

To learn more about MVP, visit www.research.va.gov/mvp. For more information or to participate, call toll-free 866-441-6075.

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