

VAU.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
Media RelationsWashington, DC 20420
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www.va.govFOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Jan. 24, 2020

American Heart Association praises VA genetic research

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) earned national recognition for its impact on heart disease and stroke science in [VA studies](#) published in 2019.

The American Heart Association (AHA) lauded the research as top examples of how gene studies expand knowledge.

The studies were based on VA's [Million Veteran Program](#) (MVP) landmark research effort. MVP is a national research program to learn how genes, lifestyle and military exposures affect health and illness.

“This acknowledgment is a testament to the scientific and medical impact of VA research,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “More than 30 studies are underway that use MVP data, and the work is expected to lead to many advances in health care for Veterans and all Americans.”

One of the studies focused on [peripheral artery disease](#), a common circulatory problem in which narrowed arteries reduce blood flow to limbs. The other study looked at [venous thromboembolism](#), in which a blood clot forms in the deep veins of the leg, groin or arm and travels in circulation, lodging in the lungs.

Both studies pinpointed gene targets that could lead to new drugs to treat the conditions, which affect millions of Veterans and other Americans.

MVP-based studies focus on topics including PTSD, suicide prevention, heart disease and diabetes. Findings from several studies have appeared in high-impact medical and scientific journals. More than 800,000 Veterans are already enrolled in MVP, and the recent launch of [online enrollment](#) has made it easier for more Veterans to take part.

AHA has recognized other major advances in which VA played a role. They included a [major finding on blood pressure control](#) and a [study](#) using smartwatches to warn of irregular heartbeats.

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