

**VA**U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# News Release

Office of Public Affairs  
Media RelationsWashington, DC 20420  
(202) 461-7600  
[www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Feb. 5, 2021

## VA advances medical research for minority Veterans with new genomic tool

**WASHINGTON** — The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) launched a new genomic research tool designed to help VA researchers learn more about how conditions such as cancer, diabetes and heart disease affect Veterans from minority backgrounds.

Debuting in January, the laboratory tool, known as the Ethnic Focused genotyping array or DNA chip, will test more than 750,000 genetic variants, including over 300,000 that are more common in minority populations.

The tool was custom-built for VA's [Million Veteran Program](#) (MVP) which studies how genes affect health.

"This is potentially a game changer in medical research for Black and Hispanic Veterans and other members of minority ethnic and racial groups," said Acting VA Under Secretary for Health Richard A. Stone, M.D. "Thanks to MVP, VA is leading the way in health research that will benefit communities that have traditionally been underserved by the health care system and underrepresented in medical research."

A genotyping chip is a piece of glass about the size of postage stamp containing hundreds of thousands of tiny bits of synthetic DNA. These DNA probes allow researchers to identify genetic variants in the DNA of research volunteers.

The probes also associate certain health traits — like increased risk for a disease or unfavorable reactions to a drug with specific genetic patterns. This can lead to new treatment approaches for patients with those gene profiles.

With more than 830,000 Veteran volunteers currently enrolled, MVP is one of the largest health and genetic databases in the world and has generated dozens of influential scientific publications.

Currently, over 30 ongoing studies based on MVP data are examining conditions ranging from heart disease and diabetes to post-traumatic stress disorder, schizophrenia and suicide risk. In recent months, researchers have begun using MVP data to study the impacts of COVID-19 on Veterans.

MVP is also one of the world's most diverse genomic databases, with about a quarter of enrollees belonging to minority groups. MVP has been successful in engaging Veterans from minority communities in part thanks to VA's [Center for Minority Veterans](#). The two plan to collaborate this year and beyond ,to further boost the involvement of Black, Hispanic and other minority Veterans in the landmark genomic research program.

Learn more about [MVP](#).

###