
Gulf War Illness Compensation & Care vfw.org

Posted by moe - 2009/11/12 20:55

Compensation & Care

As Gerald Manar, deputy director of VFW's National Veterans Service, points out, "An undiagnosed illness is not the same as 'Gulf War Illness or Syndrome.' The IOM study failed to find a single new disability, or a common collection of symptoms, which could be related to the Gulf War experience.

"However, qualifying veterans can still receive benefits if they have a diagnosis of chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, irritable bowel syndrome or a disability which cannot be diagnosed."

According to the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), of the 696,841 troops who served in the 1991 war zone, 14,895 had processed compensation claims for undiagnosed illnesses as of February 2007. Of those processed, some 3,733, or 25%, were granted service connection.

A first step to care is to enroll in the Gulf War Medical Exam Program and complete the free medical check-up. Neither a current illness nor VA enrollment is required. Nearly 100,000 vets have done so to date.

"The proactive approach by the VA in identifying, qualifying and treating Gulf War veterans is a step in the right direction," says Jim Willis, director of the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs. "I would encourage all Gulf War veterans to seek the medical assistance they need and to register with the VA as soon as possible."

The presumptive period for granting compensation expires Dec. 31, 2011.

Over a five-year period, the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center could spend up to \$75 million on related research. The federal grants will allow the center's Gulf War Research Area to conduct and manage projects. Also, there is an advanced brain-imaging facility there. The university center collaborates with the Dallas VA Medical Center.

Moreover, \$10 million will be spent on a survey of 10,000 vets regarding symptoms and to study the brains of hundreds who are currently suffering from various ailments.

"The quest for treatment and compensation for the mysterious illnesses afflicting a significant portion of Persian Gulf War vets has been long and difficult," says Bill Bradshaw, director of VFW's National Veterans Service. "But VFW is in it for the long haul until the medical questions are satisfactorily answered."

More information for Gulf War veterans is available at www.va.gov/gulfwar, or call the VA Gulf War Helpline at 1-800-PGW-VETS (1-800-749-8387).

Also, the Gulf War Review newsletter can be found at www.VA.gov/environagents.

Potential Signs of Undiagnosed Illnesses:

- Fatigue
 - Unexplained Dermatological Signs or Disorders
 - Headache
 - Muscle Pain
 - Joint Pain
 - Neurological Signs and Symptoms
 - Neuropsychological Signs or Symptoms
 - Symptoms or Signs Involving the Upper or Lower Respiratory System
 - Sleep Disturbances
 - Gastrointestinal Signs or Symptoms
 - Abnormal Weight Loss
 - Menstrual Disorders
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