

VVA Presentation Before the IOM Committee

For the Ninth Biennial Review of the Health Effects in Vietnam
Veterans of Exposure to Herbicides



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While great strides have been made over the last several years in understanding the health effects of exposure to the phenoxy herbicides used in Vietnam, there are still way too many lingering questions. Vietnam veterans and their families continue to suffer and die from a variety of health conditions, without any apparent family history of such conditions.

For example, in the *Veterans and Agent Orange 2008 Update*, the IOM Committee concluded that it was plausible exposure to herbicides that could cause paternally mediated effects in offspring as a result of epigenetic changes, and that such changes would most likely be attributable to the TCDD contaminants in Agent Orange. However, it was also noted that there are limited data on paternal exposures which result in adverse effects on their offspring, and the committee recommended:

1. That laboratory research be conducted to “characterize TCDD’s potential for inducing epigenetic modifications”; and
2. Epidemiological protocols are formulated to address the logistical challenge of determining whether adverse effects are being manifested in the adult children and grandchildren of Vietnam veterans as a result of such exposure.

The Committee also noted the need for additional research in toxicology to determine the mechanisms by which dioxin-like chemicals contribute to the progression of various chronic conditions plaguing the health of aging veterans.

VVA strongly urges that the Committee revisits the analysis and recommendations of the Blue Water Navy panel.

Furthermore, in the *Veterans and Agent Orange 2010 Update*, that IOM committee recommended the VA search its own records to look for possible associations between Vietnam service and specific health outcomes, particularly those that are relatively uncommon. The Committee also noted that if this posed a conflict of interest, an external advisory group be formed to formulate a mechanism by which these medical databases could be made available for external study.

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) asks: **What, if anything, has come from those IOM Committee recommendations?**

While VVA applauds the Committee’s work on behalf of our Vietnam veterans, their children, and the generations to follow, VVA also understands the Committee’s frustrations regarding the apparent lack of follow through by the VA on its past recommendations.

However, after convening nearly 30+ Agent Orange “town hall” meetings attended by Vietnam veterans and their families and gathering testimonials from them, it is very clear that the effects of chemical toxins have also been visited on the progeny of those who were exposed during their military service. We have asked veterans to consider filing a claim with the VA for their children and grandchildren with the hopes that one day, the VA will implement the Committee’s recommendation to use their own records to search for associations.

Attached is a list of studies compiled by VVA that were published during 2011 and 2012 which we hope will assist the Committee in fulfilling its charge for the next *Veterans and Agent Orange* update.

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Ear & Other Sensory Organs

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Respiratory System

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