ABOUT WOMEN’S HEALTH

• At each VA medical center nationwide, a Women Veterans program manager is designated to advise and advocate for women Veterans. These program managers help coordinate services for eligible women for both primary and specialized care.

• Gender-specific primary care programs include cervical cancer and breast cancer screening, birth control, prescription counseling, human papillomavirus vaccine, and menopausal support such as hormone replacement therapy.

• Mental health programs geared specifically for women include evaluation and assistance for issues including depression, mood, and anxiety disorders; intimate partner and domestic violence; sexual trauma; parenting and anger management; and marital, caregiver, or family related stress.

• Special services are available to women who have experienced military sexual trauma (MST). VA provides free, confidential counseling and treatment for mental and physical health conditions related to MST.

• Reproductive health care includes maternity care, infertility evaluation and limited treatment; sexual problems, tubal ligation, and urinary incontinence.

• VA also offers special programs providing services for homeless women Veterans and those who have undergone domestic violence. The department also offers help to women Veterans who are interested in education and training, employment assistance, and vocational rehabilitation.

VA RESEARCH ON WOMEN’S HEALTH: OVERVIEW

• VA researchers are looking at a broad range of health issues related to women Veterans, including gender differences in health status and medical care; risk and resilience factors; mental and behavioral health; the impacts of military service and combat; sexual trauma; gynecological and reproductive care; access to care; improving the quality and delivery of care; and women Veterans’ experiences of and preferences for care.

• Deployment and post-deployment health research is now a major portion of the VA women’s health research portfolio, extending VA’s knowledge of the health care needs of women returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as women still on active duty.

• The goal of VA’s Women’s Healthcare CREATE is to use research to accelerate the implementation of comprehensive care for women Veterans, and to focus on fundamental issues in how VA delivers care to women Veterans in the context of national VHA policy.

SELECTED MILESTONES AND MAJOR EVENTS

1992 – Formally targeted women Veterans’ health issues as a research priority and conducted a series of studies on their health care needs

1993 – Established the Women’s Health Sciences Division within the National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

1998 – Released the “Women Vietnam Veterans Reproductive Outcomes Health Study,” which found that women Vietnam Veterans had a statistically significant increase in the prevalence of children with birth defects in comparison with women Veterans who had not served in Vietnam.

2005 – Held the first women’s health research agenda-setting conference

2009 – Initiated the largest health study ever of Vietnam-era women Veterans

2010 – Created the Women’s Health Practice Based Research Network to include more women in VA studies and to sharpen the focus on their health needs

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