

Military Exposures Research Program

The Military Exposures Research Program (MERP) is an Office of Research and Development (ORD) initiative that aims to:

- Improve our understanding of the effects of military exposures on Veteran health. **Military exposures** refer to contact with toxic agents, singly or in combination, acquired through ingestion, respiratory, or skin contact routes during military service (Deployment, Occupation, or Garrison).
- Advance the field of **exposure assessment**, which refers to qualitative and/or quantitative identification and measurement of toxic agent(s) to which a Veteran was exposed during military service. Exposure assessment may include the development of new methods and/or assays that will directly or indirectly identify and measure an exposure to a toxic agent using biological materials or surrogates.

Through scientific advancement, MERP will contribute to national efforts that seek to inform Veteran care and policy.

Background: The Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act recognizes toxic exposure as a cost of war, ensuring generations of Veterans who suffer from toxic exposure-related conditions get the benefits and care they've earned. As part of the PACT ACT, Congress authorized the Cost of War Toxic Exposures Fund (TEF) fund. The MERP director provides technical oversight of the TEF in the Office of Research and Development to support administrative and investigator-initiated research.

The MERP is an actively managed portfolio (AMP) which prioritizes translational communication, coordination, and collaboration between clinicians, researchers, and other stakeholders to solve specific questions regarding real-world health challenges faced by Veterans.

For Investigators: The MERP provides nationally recognized experts as consultants for investigator-initiated research related to Military Exposures.

Investigators are encouraged to consult with Cores following pre-application approval or initial award steps (Just-In-Time).

- **Administrative Core** - Facilitates programmatic coordination and strategic planning among MERP stakeholders, including providing guidance to MERP investigators on MERP procedures and regulatory needs.
- **Data and Biorepository Commons Core** - Fills programmatic gaps with a focus on building and facilitating knowledge and access to trusted military-exposure data and biospecimens for military exposures research.
- **Exposure Assessment Core** – Builds VA capacity in exposure assessment science and supports MERP-funded investigators in the characterization of military exposures by providing subject matter expertise and technical assistance.

Who do I contact for more information?

General questions about our:

- Program
- Research
- Investigator Resources

MERP Administrative Core:
MERPAdminCore@va.gov

Other program needs:

Scientific Program Manager:
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