

Committee on the Epidemiologic Study
on the
Health of Veterans Who Served at Fort McClellan
1979-1999

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Why VVA Is Here: A Legacy of Toxic Exposure Advocacy

- Vietnam veterans didn't come home to parades. We had to fight to be heard.
 - VVA guiding principle: "Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another."
- VVA membership is rooted in Vietnam veterans, but our advocacy spans:
 - Veterans & families of all wars and eras (pre/post 9/11 + those who served between conflicts)
- Beyond PTSD... VVA has led the fight for recognition of toxic exposures:
 - Agent Orange and dioxin contamination
 - The "rainbow of herbicides" (White, Blue, Pink, Purple, Green)
 - Gulf War Illness
 - 2,4-D and Glyphosate
- At Fort McClellan:
 - Exposure risks include PCBs, chemical agents, radiological materials, solvents, pesticides
 - Many veterans still lack comprehensive medical evaluation

We cannot ignore potential harm because of what we may find.
That is not America. We must pursue the truth.



What VVA Is Asking: Registry & Scientific Action

VVA calls on the National Academy of Medicine to recommend

1. Fort McClellan Registry Examination

- Standardized, comprehensive VA medical exams
- Creates a documented cohort of exposed veterans

2. Federal Advisory Committee

- Independent, science-based body to:
 - ✓ Review all research
 - ✓ Identify gaps and priorities
 - ✓ Inform policy and future presumptive decisions

Use modern science and technology to determine the truth.
Then act on it.



Why a Registry & Advisory Structure Is Essential

Early Identification & Documentation

- Standardized exams document illnesses linked to toxic exposure
- Critical when exposures are complex, decades old, or not yet presumptive

Builds a Reliable Data Set to:

- Identify disease patterns and prevalence
- Inform rulemaking and presumptive decisions
- Support fair adjudication of disability claims
- Without it, veterans carry an unfair burden of proof

Research Infrastructure & Readiness

- Creates a ready cohort for VA, NIH, and federal research
- Essential for complex exposure environments like Fort McClellan (*multiple contaminants + long latency periods*)

Foundation for Descendant Research

- Enables structured study of intergenerational health effects
- Without it, there is no clear pathway to study families



The Critical Gap: Research on Biological Descendants

Toxic exposure may extend beyond the veteran - Study Veterans' Descendants

- **Missed Health Risks:** If intergenerational effects exist, they go undetected and untreated.
 - Families may face patterns of illness with no explanation or support
- **Incomplete Science:** You only understand half the impact of toxic exposure
 - Weakens future research, policy decisions, and credibility of findings
- **Delayed (or Denied) Benefits:** Without evidence, policymakers cannot act
 - Families who may be affected are excluded from recognition or assistance
- **Repeating Past Mistakes:** We saw this after Agent Orange
 - Decades passed before links to descendants were seriously studied
- **Loss of Critical Data:** Time matters
 - Veterans age
 - Families disperse
 - Medical histories are lost

If we don't study biological descendants, we risk missing the full cost of service and leaving the next generation to carry it alone.

