

History of the Center

Expert and Compassionate Care for Deployment Veterans—Resources for Clinicians

Gulf War Illness

The [Deployment Health Clinical Center \(DHCC\)](#), situated at [Walter Reed Army Medical Center](#), began as the Gulf War Health Center in 1994. Shortly after the 1991 Gulf War, some of the 700,000 service members deployed during that conflict began to present for care with symptoms they believed were related to their deployment. The unclear etiology of some symptoms, such as excessive fatigue, memory/concentration problems, and certain physical complaints, presented a challenge for both military providers and patients. The [Comprehensive Clinical Evaluation Program \(CCEP\)](#) was implemented in response to these concerns, and the Gulf War Health Center developed the CCEP's intensive tertiary treatment component to treat veterans who remained symptomatic after appropriate medical care. This tertiary treatment became the [Specialized Care Program](#). More than 100 cycles of this three-week, multi-disciplinary program have been delivered to deployment veterans. In response to the increased operational tempo associated with Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, DHCC has developed a new program, the [Specialized Care Program Track II](#). This program is designed to treat service members with combat stress, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or difficulties re-adjusting to life in the U.S. The program is based on the best available evidence regarding effective treatments for PTSD and employs the successful therapeutic milieu of the Specialized Care Program for medically unexplained physical symptoms (now called [Track I](#)).

Deployment Health

The 1999 Strom Thurmond National Defense Authorization Act established three centers of excellence devoted to deployment health. In 2001, the [Gulf War Health Center transitioned to the Deployment Health Clinical Center](#), the clinical component of these centers of excellence. DHCC's mission was expanded to include clinical care of veterans of all conflicts. At that time, DHCC was also tasked with providing deployment-related health research and developing deployment-related health education and training programs and products for both clinicians and service members and their families. DHCC also added [risk communication](#), clinical and health services research, and epidemiological expertise to its staff.

[DHCC's research program](#) began with a focus on illnesses associated with the 1991 Gulf War. DHCC now has a research portfolio comprising a dozen demographic and epidemiology projects, nine health services research projects, and clinical trails. Major focus areas for DHCC research include post-war syndromes, especially illness related to the 1991 Gulf War, medically unexplained physical symptoms, and posttraumatic stress disorder that occurs subsequent to combat, sexual assault, or terrorist attack. Each year DHCC staff publishes more than 20 articles in peer-reviewed publications as well as giving presentations world-wide.

DHCC launched its Web site, [PDHealth.mil](#), in January 2001, redesigning it in May 2002. The Web site receives more than 110,000 hits per month. DHCC risk communication outreach was enhanced in 2002 with daily distribution of the electronic [Deployment Health News](#), currently sent to more than 1000 subscribers. DHCC began the [Deployment](#)

[Health Guest Lecturer series](#) at Walter Reed in 2003 and began providing a [Deployment Healthcare Track](#) at the Seventh Annual Force Health Protection Conference in 2004.

Post-Deployment Health Clinical Practice Guidelines

DHCC was involved in the creation of the [DoD/VA Post-Deployment Health Evaluation and Management Clinical Practice Guideline \(PDH-CPG\)](#). The guideline was completed in 2001 following Institute of Medicine recommendations to incorporate deployment healthcare into primary care and to regularly screen all military beneficiaries. The guideline was launched in 2002 and revitalized in 2004. DHCC supports the rollout of this guideline through [video](#), [Web-based](#), and [desktop tools](#), the [DHCC Provider Helpline](#), and visits to military treatment facilities by the [Staff Training and Assistance Team](#). DHCC also supports the DoD/VA guidelines for primary-care based detection and treatment of [depression](#), [PTSD](#), and [medically unexplained symptoms](#) through staff assistance, training programs, and research projects. DHCC helped redesign the [DD Form 2796](#) (Post-Deployment Health Assessment) and the assessment process for re-deploying veterans at the beginning of the Iraq War, and the Center continues to provide support for clinical management of and clinical resources about emerging health concerns for current operations.

DHCC remains committed to providing compassionate state-of-the-art care for America's deployment veterans while giving their providers the research, resources, and tools they need to do the same.