



OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF WAR  
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

PERSONNEL AND  
READINESS

FEB 23 2026

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Chair  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Madam Chair:

The Department's response to Senate Report 118–204, page 280, accompanying S. 4921, the Department of Defense Appropriations Bill, 2025, "Medical Research to Support Military Families," is enclosed.

This report summarizes Department of War research efforts addressing midlife women's health and menopause. It provides an overview of the projects funded since Fiscal Year 2022 by the Defense Health Agency, the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs, and the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, including their status and total investments. Through collaborations with academic and industry partners, the Department remains committed to supporting impactful research and addressing critical medical research gaps in women's health, with the ultimate goal of improving well-being and health outcomes and enhancing the overall readiness of the Armed Forces.

Thank you for your continued strong support for the health and well-being of our Service members and their families. I am sending a similar letter to the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

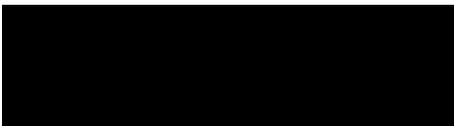
Sincerely,



Sean O'Keefe  
Deputy Under Secretary of War for Personnel  
and Readiness

Enclosure:  
As stated

cc:  
The Honorable Patty Murray  
Vice Chair





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The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

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Sincerely,

  
Sean O'Keere  
Deputy Under Secretary of War for Personnel  
and Readiness

Enclosure:  
As stated

cc:  
The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro  
Ranking Member



# Report to the Committees on Appropriations of the Senate and the House of Representatives



## Medical Research to Support Military Families

**February 2026**

The estimated cost of this report for the Department of War (DoW) is approximately \$5,400.00 in Fiscal Year 2025. This includes \$0.00 in expenses and \$5,400.00 in DoW labor.

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## **PURPOSE**

This report is in response to Senate Report 118–204, page 280, accompanying S. 4921, the Department of Defense Appropriations Bill, 2025, “Medical Research to Support Military Families.” Senate Report 118–204 requests that the Assistant Secretary of War for Health Affairs (ASW(HA)) submit a report to the Committees on Appropriations of the Senate and the House of Representatives on the status of the research being done on menopause and mid-life women’s health. The Department provided a briefing addressing the additional congressional request in the report,<sup>1</sup> specifically on the research plan and expected timelines in areas of military family health and well-being. These areas included adverse childhood events, medical barriers to growing and supporting families, mental and behavioral health, substance use disorders, gender-specific healthcare, and menopause and mid-life women’s health.

## **BACKGROUND**

Department of War (DoW) medical research in women’s health focuses on three key areas: conditions specific to women, conditions with a disproportionate impact on women, and conditions that uniquely affect women in a military-relevant context. DoW funds research into diseases and conditions such as ovarian cancer, endometrial cancer, endometriosis, maternal mental health, and menopause. To address gaps in women’s health medical research, DoW investments leverage Congressional Special Interest and Defense Health Program Core and Restoral funds. Since Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, the Defense Health Agency (DHA), the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP), and the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) have committed funding for women’s health research topics.

## **STATUS**

In this report, “mid-life” is defined as the age range between 40 and 65 years, encompassing the late reproductive to late postmenopausal stages of reproductive aging. This period includes menopausal transition and post-menopause, up to the age where, presumably, ovarian senescence no longer actively influences the aging process.<sup>2</sup> During FY 2022-FY 2024, DHA funded one project for \$2.1M addressing mid-life women’s health. Data collection efforts are currently underway for this ongoing study, “The Development of a Clinical Predictive Tool to Predict Osteoporosis and Fractures in Women Using Serum Biomarkers.” At present, DHA does not have any funded studies addressing menopause.

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<sup>1</sup> Medical Research to Support Military Families. Senate Report 118–204, page 280, requests that the ASW(HA) brief the Committees on Appropriations of the Senate and the House of Representatives on the plan for research in these areas, including an expected timeline for the research, not later than 90 days after enactment.

<sup>2</sup> Harlow SD, Derby CA. Women's Midlife Health: Why the Midlife Matters. *Women's Midlife Health*. 2015;1:5. doi: 10.1186/s40695-015-0006-7

During FY 2022-FY 2023,<sup>3</sup> CDMRP invested \$13.9M in menopause-related research (Table 1). This research explores a wide range of menopause-related medical issues that may impact active duty Service women.

**Table 1. FY 2022-FY 2023 CDMRP Menopause- Related Research**

<p><i>Perimenopause/Menopause</i> (\$5.3M)</p>	<p><u>Cancer</u>: Research to address diseases for which age-at-menopause-onset is an associated risk factor (e.g., ovarian cancer) and to examine ovarian cancer treatment alternatives that induce premature menopause.</p>
<p><i>Post-Menopause</i> (\$4.3M)</p>	<p><u>Cancer</u>: Research to address cancers significantly more common during post-menopause (e.g., endometrial cancer and high-grade serous ovarian carcinoma) and to examine conditions that stabilize during post-menopause (e.g., lymphangioleiomyomatosis tumors).</p> <p><u>Pain</u>: Research to address postmenopausal endometriosis, a chronic condition that causes severe pain, and to examine pain syndromes more common among women that recede during post-menopause (e.g., migraines).</p>
<p><i>Treatments</i> (\$4.3M)</p>	<p><u>Cancer</u>: Research to reduce ovarian cancer risk among women taking menopausal hormone therapy.</p> <p><u>Hormone Therapy</u>: Research to improve understanding of progestins, compounds used in the treatment of menopausal symptoms.</p>

Current research includes multiple studies investigating endometrial and ovarian cancer, which are among the most common cancers during the menopausal period. To address pain syndromes specific to women, CDMRP has funded a preclinical study of a potential hormone-based therapeutic that could be useful for a variety of pain conditions, and a population-based study on risk factors for endometriosis. These projects are underway with the first set of results expected in 2026.

During FY 2022-FY 2023,<sup>4</sup> CDMRP women’s health research investments included \$1.5M for research examining correlations between menopause and toxic exposures, including exposures potentially linked to military service. This research is evaluating the effect of environmental contaminants (e.g., “forever chemicals”) on ovarian function and risk of early menopause. This is an ongoing, 3-year project to determine whether “forever chemicals,” per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), accumulate in the ovaries and impact ovarian function. Once completed, outcomes of this study will provide insight on how PFAS exposures impact women’s reproductive health, including menopause. Study results are expected in 2026.

<sup>3</sup> CDMRP FY 2024 women’s health research investment amounts are unavailable until after September 30, 2025.

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Additional research is exploring the relationship between toxic exposure (e.g., particulate matter air pollution), premature ovarian failure, and risk of Alzheimer’s disease after menopause. This is an ongoing, 3-year project to determine how fine particulate matter found in air pollution and burn pits to which Service women are exposed reduces ovarian reserve and leads to premature menopause. Study investigators are evaluating inflammatory changes in the brain associated with Alzheimer’s disease. They will then determine whether reduced ovarian reserve, combined with the neurologic effects of toxic exposures, accelerates Alzheimer’s disease onset. Study results are expected in early 2027.

USUHS manages the Military Women’s Health Research Program (MWHRP), which facilitates interdisciplinary and international collaborative research to improve healthcare access and quality for active duty Service women and veterans, addressing their unique health needs and supporting an operationally ready, deployable force. Between FY 2022-FY 2024, the MWHRP funded one study for \$814K addressing menopause and mid-life women’s health. This ongoing study, “Evaluation of Mid-Life Health Experiences of Active Duty and Women Veterans and the Impact of a Virtual Midlife Menopause Clinic on Menopause-Related Quality of Life and Symptoms,” will assess the unmet midlife and menopause health needs of active duty Service members and veterans assigned female at birth through surveys and focus groups. It will also evaluate whether a virtual telehealth menopause clinic can improve their quality of life and treatment satisfaction. The study’s findings will provide critical evidence-based data to inform DoW policymakers on how to effectively address these healthcare gaps, with the ultimate goal of improving operational readiness and retention of experienced women in the military.

## **SUMMARY**

The Department continues to invest in medical research to support women’s health. DoW efforts are focused on psychological health, neuromusculoskeletal injury prevention and treatment, optimized performance, and sustained medical readiness of Service women. The Department is committed to working in collaboration with academic and industry partners supporting impactful research to improve operational readiness and provide medical solutions for Service women.