



PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

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

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

AUG 11 2026

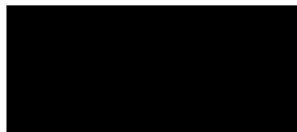
Dear Madam Chair:

The Department's response to Senate Report 119-52, page 219, accompanying S. 2572, the Department of Defense Appropriations Bill, 2026, "Medical Research to Support Military Families," is enclosed. Senate Report 119-52, page 219, requests a report on the status of research being done on menopause and mid-life women's health. The Department of War provided a briefing addressing the additional congressional request in the report specifically on the research plan and expected timelines in areas of military family health and well-being.

The Department's Defense Health Program (DHP) funds medical research in women's health, specifically on menopause and mid-life. The Defense Health Agency, Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs, and Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences manage DHP Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation Core and Congressional Special Interest investments and provided this update on relevant efforts.

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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OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF WAR
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The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

AUG 11 2026

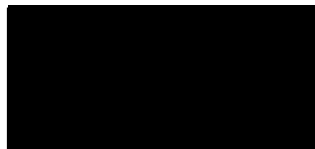
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Sincerely,



Sean O'Keefe
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

August 2026

The estimated cost of this report or study for the Department of War (DoW) is approximately \$4,490 for the 2026 Fiscal Year. This includes \$0 in expenses and \$4,490 in DoW labor.
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PURPOSE

This report is in response to Senate Report 119–52, page 219, accompanying S. 2572, the Department of Defense Appropriations Bill, 2026, “Medical Research to Support Military Families.” Senate Report 119–52, page 219, requests a report to the Committees on Appropriations of the Senate and the House of Representatives on the status of research being done on menopause and mid-life¹ women’s health. The Department of War (DoW) provided a briefing addressing the additional congressional request in the report² specifically on the research plan and expected timelines in areas of military family health and well-being. This report provides a status update on the Department’s Defense Health Program (DHP)-funded medical research in women’s health specifically on menopause and mid-life.

BACKGROUND

DHP-funded medical research in women’s health continues to focus 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. The Defense Health Agency (DHA), the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP), and the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) manage DHP Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation Core and Congressional Special Interest appropriations that support women’s health research topics, including ovarian cancer, endometrial cancer, endometriosis, maternal mental health, and menopause and midlife women’s health.

STATUS

DHA Research

During Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-FY 2025, DHA funded one project for \$2.1 million (M) addressing mid-life women’s health titled, “The Development of a Clinical Predictive Tool to Predict Osteoporosis and Fractures in Women Using Serum Biomarkers.” Data collection efforts are underway for this study. In FY 2025 and FY 2026, a total of \$30M was appropriated to support medical research in military families specifically focused on six Military Family Readiness Areas (Table 1). Intramural and extramural solicitations were drafted requesting research proposals and released on July 10, 2025, with full proposals received on December 1, 2025. FY 2025 and FY 2026 funds will be obligated by September 30, 2026, and September 30, 2027, respectively. DHA is currently reviewing ten proposals pertaining to menopause and mid-life women’s health.

¹ In this report, “mid-life” continues to be 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.

² Medical Research to Support Military Families. Senate Report 119–52, page 219, requests a briefing to 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.

**Table 1. FY 2025-FY 2026 DHP-funded Medical Research Supporting Military Families
Military Family Readiness Overview**

Military Family Readiness Areas	Proposals Received
Adverse Childhood Events	4
Menopause and Midlife Women’s Health	10
Medical Barriers to Growing and Supporting Families	5
Sex-Specific Health Care	3
Mental Health	20
Substance Use Disorders	5
Total Submissions Received	47

CDMRP Research

During FY 2022-FY 2024, the CDMRP invested \$23.7M in menopause-related research (Table 2). This research explores a wide range of menopause-related medical issues that may impact active duty Service women. FY 2025 investments are pending and will be finalized no later than September 30, 2026.

Table 2. FY 2022-FY 2024 DHA CDMRP Menopause-Related Research

<i>Perimenopause/Menopause</i> <i>(\$9.9M)</i>	<u>Cancer:</u> Research to address cancers for which menopause is an associated risk factor (e.g., ovarian cancer) and to examine ovarian cancer treatment alternatives that induce premature menopause. <u>Autoimmune Disease:</u> Research to examine biological impacts on muscular function in women with multiple sclerosis. <u>Cardiovascular Disease:</u> Research to determine if toxic exposures result in increased risk for cardiac disease.
<i>Post-Menopause</i> <i>(\$9.1M)</i>	<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). <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).

<i>Treatments</i> <i>(\$4.7M)</i>	<u>Cancer</u>: Research to reduce ovarian cancer risk among women taking menopausal hormone therapy. <u>Hormone Therapy</u>: Research to improve understanding of progestins, compounds used in the treatment of menopausal symptoms. <u>Cardiovascular Disease</u>: Research to improve understanding of aging effects on atherosclerosis and to identify potential therapeutic targets.
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Several of these CDMRP investments are expected to yield their first sets of results in 2026:

- Multiple studies investigating endometrial and ovarian cancer, which are among the most common cancers during the menopausal period;
- Studies evaluating how menstruation and aging affect neuromuscular function and frailty in women with multiple sclerosis to understand how women’s physiology impacts symptoms of this autoimmune disease;
- A preclinical study of a potential hormone-based therapeutic that could be useful for a variety of pain conditions;
- A population-based study on risk factors for endometriosis to address pain syndromes specific to women;
- A project to determine whether “forever chemicals,” per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), accumulate in the ovaries and impact ovarian function—this study’s outcomes will provide insight on how PFAS exposures impact women’s reproductive health, including menopause; and
- A project evaluating whether heavy metal lead exposure affects women differently from men across the life course by increasing risk for heart disease.

CDMRP has also supported research exploring the relationship between toxic exposure (e.g., particulate matter air pollution), premature ovarian failure, and risk of Alzheimer’s disease after menopause. This project will 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. The investigators expect study results in 2027.

USUHS Research

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. The USUHS MWHRP funded two critical menopause-focused studies between FY 2022 and FY 2025. The first is assessing unmet mid-

life health needs and evaluates a virtual telehealth menopause clinic to provide DoW policymakers with evidence-based data for improving retention. The second is a quality improvement project at Fort Bliss that implements a menopause digital decision aid tool in primary care to train providers and standardize treatment. Together, these initiatives aim to address significant healthcare gaps in the Military Health System by enhancing provider competence, reducing care variability, and optimizing mid-life women's health management.

SUMMARY

The Department's DHP continues to invest in medical research to support women's health, including menopause and midlife. Overall, women's health research 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 interagency, academic and industry partners supporting impactful research to improve operational readiness and provide medical solutions for Service women.