



VET NEWS



MERCER COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE COMMISSION

Volume 1
Issue 2

Phone: 419-586-3542

June
2023

VA Researcher helping to change the future of Alzheimer's Disease.

(Article from the VA News
By Rachel Merle-Smith)



Dr. Mark Logue is a statistician and researcher whose work with VA's Million Veteran Program focuses on Alzheimer's and dementia.

As he arrives to work each morning, Logue is reminded why he's chosen to research genetics at VA, looking for factors that influence health risks for Veterans. "When I walk through the lobby I see people waiting for treatments and I know we're helping Veterans just like them," he said.

Logue joined the Army Reserve to help pay for college. His studies at the University of Oregon were interrupted briefly when he deployed to Germany to work in Medical Supply in support of Operation Desert Storm. After graduation, he attended the University of Iowa where he worked on a Ph.D. in Statistics and researched the genetics of mental health and panic disorder. That led him to Boston University where he began researching Alzheimer's disease.

He began a collaboration to study posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) genetics with colleagues at the National

Center for PTSD, Behavioral Sciences Division, where he now works as a full-time VA statistician and genetics researcher.

An important discovery

Given his background as both a researcher and Veteran, Logue (pictured above) wanted to search for potential links between various aspects of brain health, including PTSD, traumatic brain injury (TBI), Alzheimer's disease and other related dementias (ADRD). "Using the Million Veterans Program (MVP) data and making sure that the results are widely distributed helps ensure that my genetic findings will benefit Veterans," he added.

Past research has shown that certain genes affect the risk of Alzheimer's disease later in life and that ADRD risk is higher for those who have had PTSD or a TBI. Logue set out to answer an important question: Do PTSD and TBI interact with Alzheimer's disease genes to lead to even more cases of ADRD? The findings were clear: PTSD and TBI do increase a Veteran's risk for developing ADRD, and these effects were higher in those with high-risk Alzheimer's genes.

What does this research mean for Veterans?

Logue's research already has positive implications for Veteran health. The Department of Defense and the Veteran's Brain Injury Center estimate that 22% of all Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom combat wounds are brain injuries. Better screening and identification of injuries like TBI may lead to earlier detection and better outcomes for Veterans at risk of ADRD.

His research also opens up the potential for new discoveries, like finding new genes linked to Alzheimer's disease risk that could

help researchers and doctors develop better treatments and preventions. Someday, researchers may even be able to identify people with a high risk of Alzheimer's disease long before symptoms begin and help prevent the neurological effects of Alzheimer's.

Veterans helping Veterans

As more Veterans join MVP, the potential for exciting discoveries and ultimately better Veteran health care grows. "The diversity of MVP is one of the big strengths of the study. Studying data from diverse participants leads to the identification of new risk variants and to genetic discoveries that benefit everyone," Logue said.

As a Veteran, Logue understands the power of this research and says he appreciates the opportunity to support his fellow Veterans. "A lot of us have family members or friends who have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Many of us know someone experiencing PTSD or living with the effects of a TBI. The research community is really excited about the data that is coming out of MVP. I'm grateful I can be involved and I'm motivated to keep doing research for the Veterans who made it possible," he said.

Join over 950,000 Veterans in VA's Million Veteran Program

Each Veteran that joins MVP has a positive impact on the research and discoveries made by researchers like Logue. MVP is 50,000 Veterans away from reaching its goal of enrolling one million Veterans, and this is just the beginning. In addition to brain health, MVP is studying dozens of health conditions that affect Veterans, including:

- Cancer
- Diabetes
- Heart health
- Tinnitus

Join the Million Veteran program today at www.mvp.va.gov or call 866-441-6075 to make an appointment at a participating VA facility. You don't need to receive your care at VA to participate.



**PACT Act
expands
eligibility for
survivor benefits**

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Benefits Administration

Article by the VBA, Office of Communications.

The **PACT Act**, passed in August 2022, expands Veterans' eligibility to benefits based on the addition of new presumptive conditions and toxic exposure locations. Presumptive conditions are ones VA assumes are related to military service, therefore making it easier for Veterans to connect certain conditions to their military service. As a result, more survivors are eligible for benefits than ever before.

Monthly survivor payments

Qualifying family members may be eligible to receive Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC). DIC is a monthly payment provided to the surviving spouse, dependent child or parent of a Veteran who died from a service-connected disability.

To be eligible as a surviving spouse, the survivor must have lived with the Veteran without a break until the Veteran's death, or if they were separated, the survivor was not at fault for the separation. Additionally, the survivor must have been married to the Veteran within 15 years of discharge from the period of military service during which the qualifying illness or injury started or worsened, or were married to the Veteran for at least one year, or had a child with the Veteran. Surviving spouses who have remarried may also be eligible.

A surviving child is eligible if they are not married, are not included on the surviving spouse's compensation and are under the age of 18 (under age 23 if attending school).

Children adopted out of the Veteran's family may also be eligible.

A surviving parent(s) is eligible if they are the biological, adoptive or foster parent of the Veteran and have income below a certain amount.

How to apply, re-apply, or request re-evaluation

Surviving spouses and children applying for the first time must submit an "Application for DIC, Survivors Pension, and/or Accrued Benefits, VA Form 21P-534EZ."

Surviving spouses and children requesting re-evaluation of a previously denied claim must select the option under question 7A which states, "DIC due to claimant election of a re-evaluation of a previously denied claim based on expanded eligibility under PL 117-168 (PACT Act)."

Surviving parents applying for the first time must submit "Application for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation by Parent(s), VA Form 21P-535."

Surviving parents requesting re-evaluation of a previously denied claim must select "Yes" under question 15 which asks, "Are you claiming DIC based on the election of a re-evaluation of a previously denied claim due to expanded eligibility under Public Law 117-168 (PACT Act)?"

Survivors may also request re-evaluation of a previously denied PACT Act DIC claim by submitting a "Decision Review Request: Supplemental Claim, VA Form 21-0995." If a survivor is claiming DIC based on the PACT Act, it must be clearly stated on the application.

How to submit the application

Documents may be submitted by mail, in person at a VA regional office or electronically. Electronic submission is recommended via QuickSubmit, as this is the fastest method of receipt.

Additional resources

For more information regarding DIC for spouses, dependents and parents, please visit: www.va.gov/disability/dependency-indemnity-compensation. Additional information about the PACT Act can be found at www.va.gov/PACT.



Financial Assistance

If you are, or know, a Veteran or Widow of a Veteran who is struggling with monthly expenses, call the office to set up an appointment for financial assistance. We can help with mortgage/rent, utilities, and food.

There are residency and other requirements you will be screened for to verify you are eligible to receive assistance through the Mercer County Veterans Service Commission. As well as documents that you will need to bring to the appointment with you.

All financial assistance candidates are interviewed, a debt to income ratio is completed, and if warranted, the case is presented to the Veterans Service Commission Board for decision at the regular monthly meeting on the 4th Tuesday each month.

All decisions regarding financial assistance are made by the Board.

WASHINGTON — This year, VA has hired employees at record rates to help better deliver world-class care and benefits to Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors.

The Veterans Health Administration increased its total workforce by 13,627 (3.6%) between October 2022 and April 2023, the highest growth rate for VHA in over 20 years. The Veteran Benefits Administration hired 4,120 employees during the same time period, the highest growth rate for VBA in 15 years. VHA now has 393,500 employees, and VBA now has more than 28,000 employees for the first time ever.

This hiring push will help VA continue to deliver more care and more benefits to more Veterans than ever before. It will also help VA implement the PACT Act, the largest expansion of Veteran care and benefits in generations.

“At VA, we’re hiring and retaining the best, most talented, and dedicated employees in health care — because Veterans deserve to be treated by the very best,” said Under Secretary for Health Dr. Shereef Elnahal. “With this hiring push, we’re bringing on new people with one goal in mind: providing world-class care to every Veteran who entrusts us with their health.”

“The more people we hire, the faster we can deliver Veterans the benefits they deserve — it’s as simple as that,” said Under Secretary for Benefits Josh Jacobs. “There’s no better mission in the world than serving Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors, and we encourage anyone who might be interested in joining us to go to [VA.gov/Jobs](https://www.va.gov/jobs) today.”

Thanks to recent hiring efforts, in 2022, VA processed a record number of Veteran benefit claims — delivering more than \$112 billion to Veterans — and is currently 15% ahead of that record pace in 2023. In 2022, VA also provided more than 91 million outpatient visits to the 9 million Veterans enrolled in VA health care.

In total, VHA aims to hire a record 52,000 new employees in fiscal year 2023 to meet increasing Veteran demand. VHA is ahead of pace, having hired 32,921 new employees from October through April — the most ever in the first seven months of the year.

For more information about VA’s hiring efforts, visit VA’s new workforce dashboard. VA is publishing this dashboard once a month to document our hiring efforts. The next dashboard, which will reflect the numbers listed above, will publish in June.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE



June -4

VA TRANSPORTATION

June

Veterans to Dayton VA - 21

Veterans to Lima Area - 6

Veterans to Cincinnati - 4

Total Trips - 19

Transportation requests **must** be made through the Veterans Service Commission Office at (419)586-3542. After hours/weekend instructions are on the voicemail message.

VA SCHEDULED APPOINTMENTS ONLY (Includes Community Cares appointments.)

Please call our office as soon as you know your next appointment time, so we can schedule your ride.

A Veteran's dependent may also ride the van, as long as there is room on the van.



Mercer County Veterans Service Commission Office

**Located at:
220 W. Livingston St. B270
Celina, Ohio 45822**

Monday - Friday 8:00 - 4:30
APPOINTMENTS ARE HELPFUL
BUT NOT REQUIRED
Phone (419) 586-3542
Fax (419) 586-7702

MONTHLY BOARD MEETING
VSC Board meets every
4th Tuesday of the month in the
Veterans Service Commission Office
@ 9:00a.m., unless otherwise posted.

Commissioners
Tom Leininger, DAV
Charles Howell, VFW
Ed Davis, VVA
Terry Kremer, AL
Kevin Lange, At Large

Staff
Eric Pugh - Director/CVSO
Eric.Pugh@Veterans.mercercountyohio.gov

Barb Risch - Admin/Benefits Counselor

Van Drivers
Mark Fleck
Mark Homan
Anthony Schmitz