

# VETRegistry *Twin Times*

News for Participants in the Vietnam-Era Twin Registry

VOLUME 11  
SUMMER 2017

## WELCOME

to the 11th edition of the Vietnam-Era Twin (VET) Registry newsletter, the *Twin Times*. When we reached out to VET Registry members over the past year, many of you expressed that you would like to hear from the VET Registry more often. We hear you, so one way we are responding to this feedback is by sending newsletters more frequently. We hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter. Thanks for reading!

## PUBLISHED BY

Vietnam-Era Twin Registry

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Seattle, WA 98108

The Vietnam-Era Twin Registry is housed at the Seattle Epidemiologic Research and Information Center (ERIC) in Seattle, WA, and is sponsored by the Cooperative Studies Program (CSP).

## VET Registry Research Spotlight: *Veteran's Health Survey*

A common request from VET Registry members is to receive more information about the results of research in which they participate. This article describes a large-scale VET Registry study called "The Veteran's Health Survey" that was conducted in 2011 and 2012.

**Why the research was conducted:** Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a serious condition that affects many Veterans who served during the Vietnam era. At the time the Veteran's Health Survey was conducted, little was known about the course and prevalence of PTSD in aging Vietnam-era Veterans. The survey attempted to fill that gap in knowledge.

**How the research was conducted:** All VET Registry members who were active (not deceased or withdrawn from the Registry) were invited to participate in the study.

The study had two parts: a paper-and-pencil mail survey and a telephone interview. Members were sent a paper survey about their physical and mental health. The members then completed a PTSD assessment over the telephone. The telephone survey also asked about other health conditions.

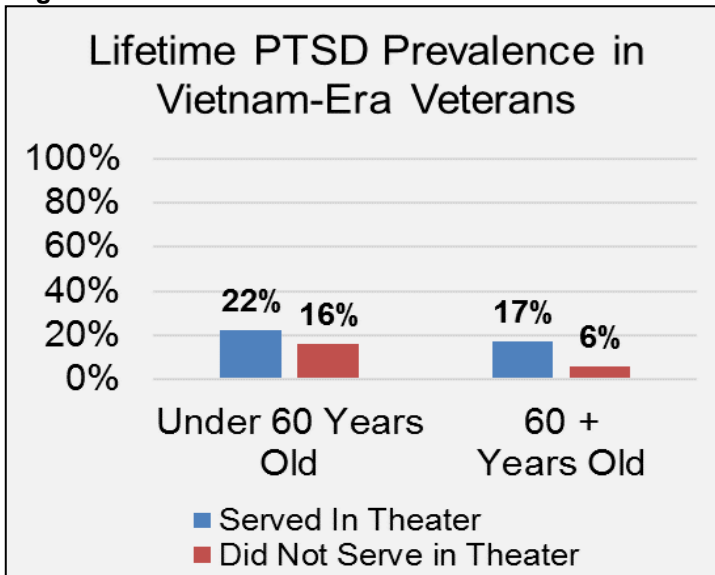
Out of 10,539 members who were invited, 7,079 members completed the mailed survey and 5,862 members completed the telephone assessment. Major findings are based on data from the 5,598 members who completed both parts of the study. The statistical analysis of the collected data was conducted by researchers from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the University of Washington. *[This article is continued on page two.]*

## *Upcoming Survey of the VET Registry*

The VET Registry is currently planning for a Registry-wide survey in 2018-2019. This survey will be sent by mail to every twin member in the VET Registry. The purpose of the study is to better understand the genetic and environmental contributions to healthy aging. The survey will ask questions about changes in your physical and mental health, as well as conditions you may have experienced such as kidney stones, high cholesterol, or back pain. The survey will take about 20-30 minutes to complete, and you will receive a small compensation for your time. Look for an invitation to participate in the Registry-wide survey in your mailbox in the future! ■

[Article continued from page one.] **Study Findings:** The prevalence of a lifetime history of PTSD depended on both age and service in theatre in Vietnam. PTSD was higher in those who were younger than 60 years when they took the survey compared with those who were 60 years and older. We also confirmed that the prevalence of PTSD is higher in Veterans who served in Vietnam. The increased prevalence was even found within identical twin pairs where one brother served in Vietnam and the other did not. Our findings are summarized in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**



**Figure 2**

**Prevalence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Aging Vietnam-Era Veterans: Veterans Administration Cooperative Study 569: Course and Consequences of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Vietnam-Era Veteran Twins**

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**Objective:** The prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among aging Vietnam-era veterans is not well characterized. **Methods:** In a cross-sectional study, 5,598 male Vietnam-era veterans and members of the Vietnam Era Twin Registry were assessed for PTSD using the Composite International Diagnostic Interview. Current symptoms were measured with the PTSD Checklist (PCL). PTSD was estimated according to age (<60 or ≥ 60) and Vietnam theater service. **Results:** The lifetime prevalence of PTSD in theater veterans aged at least 60 years was 16.9% (95% CI: 13.9%–20.5%) and higher than the 5.5% (95% CI: 4.3%–7.0%) among nontheater veterans. Among veterans younger than 60 years, the comparable prevalence was 22.0% for theater (95% CI: 16.7%–28.4%) and 15.7% for nontheater (95% CI: 13.4%–18.2%) veterans. Similar results were found for theater service and current PTSD prevalence (past 12 months). PCL scores were significantly higher in theater compared with nontheater veterans in both younger and older cohorts. In both the younger and older cohorts significant differences in lifetime and current PTSD prevalence and PCL scores persisted in theater service discordant twin pairs.

Published title page and abstract from *American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, Volume 24 Issue 3.

**Published Research:** The results of this research were published in the March 2016 edition of the *American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* in an 11-page research paper. Figure 2 shows the title page and abstract (study summary) as it appears in the journal.

The full paper can be obtained by visiting <https://go.usa.gov/xRwrr> or by calling the VET Registry at 1-800-329-8387, ext. 61964.

**Significance:** The conclusions drawn from this research highlight the importance of continuing to provide PTSD services for Veterans throughout their lifetimes. The VA has increased its scope of PTSD outreach since the end of the Vietnam War, but these findings show that PTSD continues to be a significant problem for many Veterans throughout their lifetimes. Research like this can directly impact VA policy decisions.

The findings from this study are especially powerful due to the participation of VET Registry members. The VET Registry includes men from all branches and ranks of the military and is geographically diverse with members who live in all 50 states. Because the VET Registry is composed of twins, it allows us to compare PTSD within pairs, which makes the conclusions much stronger. The VET Registry is an invaluable resource for research about Veterans' health across their lifespans. Thank you for your continued membership. ■

## ***New Toll-Free Number***

The Vietnam-Era Twin Registry phone number has changed! You may now reach us at **1-800-329-8387 ext. 61964**. This 800 number takes you directly to the VA Puget Sound Health Care System's main operator system. To bypass the automated operator message, dial the extension code 61964 at any time to reach the VET Registry. Please plan to use this number for all future contact with the Registry, as our current number will sunset after December 31, 2017. ■

## ***New Saliva Collection Effort***

One of the key parts of the VET Registry is the valuable biospecimens you as members have provided to the Registry over the years. These samples are guarded closely and constitute the biospecimen repository. The biospecimens in the VET Registry's biorepository include DNA, plasma, and serum collected from blood samples. These products are extremely valuable to the VET Registry and the research world; data collected from measuring and analyzing them can help answer many of science's biggest health-related questions.

The VET Registry would like to expand our biorepository by collecting saliva from Registry members. DNA extracted from the saliva will be used in future VET Registry studies. Saliva will be collected via kits that we will mail to members over the next several years. If we have already sent you a kit but you still need more information before you feel comfortable using it, please contact us as soon as possible (before your saliva-collecting kit expires). Please call 1-800-329-8387, ext. 61964 to speak to a VET Registry staff member. ■

## ***2017 VET Registry Focus Group***



Thanks to participants of our 2017 VET Registry focus group in Torrance, CA.  
Please visit <https://go.usa.gov/xRwrr> to read a summary of the group.



## **NO LONGER INTERESTED?**

You may decide to withdraw your membership in the Registry now or at any time in the future. If you withdraw, this means you will not be invited to participate in any future studies or receive further contact from the Registry. Note that data and samples that were previously collected while you were a member may still be used for research. As always, the VET Registry will keep all samples and data confidential, secure, and protected. To opt-out, contact us toll-free at 1-800-329-8387 ext. 61964. ■

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**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**



**CONTACT UPDATE FORM: *Please update your information if you've moved.***

TITLE \_\_\_\_ FIRST NAME \_\_\_\_\_ MI \_\_\_\_ LAST NAME \_\_\_\_\_

I'm a (*Check One*):  VETR Twin  Offspring of a VETR Twin  Mother of VETR Offspring

Address 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Address 2: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Personal Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Other Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Type: \_\_\_\_\_



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