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Eileen Whitacre for Salem-News.com

Our nation's veterans not getting the service connected benefits rightfully due to them when they are diagnosed with cancer caused by exposure to Agent Orange.

(WASHINGTON D.C.) - The tracking of cancer in the aging population of Vietnam Veterans exposed to dioxin has been neglected.

With pancreatic and brain cancer rates 5 to 7 times higher than the civilian populations and lung cancer twice the rate in veterans that served in country according to the mortality study issued by The Department of Veterans' Affairs Canberra Nov. 1997.

The VA and statistical communities do not track or have registries specific to the veteran population. In fact the VA is not required to report cancer to the National Cancer Institute's Surveillance Epidemiology End Result or SEER, the nation's statistical tracking program for cancer.

Delayed or under reporting of cancer by the VA makes it difficult to know the accurate rate and type of cancer occurring in the Vietnam veteran population, a population that was exposed to the deadly toxic Agent Orange between 1962 through 1975.

When cancer is reported by the VA to central registries the cancer at times has been found to be miscoded. The reason for withholding this critical information according to the VA is due to concerns of privacy.

This under reporting and miscoding results in our nation's veterans not getting the service connected benefits rightfully due to them when they are diagnosed with cancer caused by exposure to Agent Orange. An easy and inexpensive way to track cancer in veterans is through social security numbers.

The Institute of Medicine provides information and advice concerning health and science policy for the VA routinely uses studies from The Veterans' Affairs Canberra in its Agent Orange report.

In an email I received from Aaron Schneiderman director of the VA's epidemiology department, the VA is not tracking the rate of brain cancer in Vietnam Veterans. The widows and families of www.vietnamveteranwives.org are asking the Veteran's Affairs to track and report all cancers to the SEER and to service connect all cancers that are a result of Agent Orange exposure.

Learn more, visit: [Agent Orange Liaison](#)

[High Cancer Rates for Vietnam Veterans](#)

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