

Viet vets with leukemia may be eligible for more benefits

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Veterans Affairs Department will extend benefits to Vietnam vets with a type of leukemia that researchers now say is linked to exposure to herbicides, including Agent Orange.

Vietnam War veterans diagnosed with chronic lymphocytic leukemia, or CLL, would start receiving improved benefits. But it's the right thing to do, Principi said Thursday.

"It's sad that we have to presume service connection, because we know that (veterans) have cancer that may have been caused by their battlefield service. But it's the right thing to do," Principi said.

The Institute of Medicine, which re-examined past research on cancer risks in agricultural workers and farm community residents, announced Thursday that it had found the link between CLL and Vietnam herbicides.

Veterans Affairs expects to find about 500 new cases of CLL a year among Vietnam veterans, said spokesman Phil Budahn. About 2.6 million people served in Vietnam during the war and most are still alive.

"There are 10,000 Vietnam veterans receiving disability pay for other illnesses related to exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides used during the war, Veterans Affairs said.

"It's just one more indication that service on the battlefield exposes men and women to dangers beyond bullets, shrapnel and missiles," said Principi, who requested the review.

"Environmental hazards are as worrisome and deadly as some

of the more common forms of battlefield injury."

Although health care is available to nearly all veterans, Principi's decision means that veterans with CLL who were in Vietnam during the war will get disability compensation of about \$2,300 a month, they won't have to pay co-payments for health care to treat CLL and will have better access to the agency's health services. Principi must draft rules and publish them in the Federal Register before the benefits can take effect.

Principi's decision to extend benefits pleased veterans groups who have continued to fight for research on the illnesses suffered by veterans exposed to the defoliants.

But Rick Wiedman, Vietnam Veterans of America government relations director, said the findings are incremental and large scale research should be funded to study problems in veterans.

"At the rate we are going, little by little bit, we are all going to be dead," Wiedman said.

In December 2001, Principi extended benefits to Gulf War veterans with Lou Gehrig's disease after preliminary studies showed they were nearly twice as likely to develop the illness as other military personnel.

U.S. troops sprayed 20 million gallons of Agent Orange and other herbicides over parts of South Vietnam and Cambodia in the 1960s and '70s to clear dense jungle. Some veterans reported a variety of health problems shortly after returning from the war.

Some forms of cancer, Type 2 diabetes and birth defects in veterans' children already are

considered associated with herbicide exposures during the war. But it has been difficult to research the problem because no one knows how much chemicals troops were exposed to, the Institute of Medicine said.

"For more than two decades we've had many complaints from Vietnam veterans about serious problems from Agent Orange exposure and it's taken a long time to have sufficient proof to satisfy the VA and now we have it," said Sen. Arlen

Specter (R-Pa.), Senate Veterans Affairs Committee chairman.

By connecting the defoliant and CLL, the Institute of Medicine altered its own previous finding that not enough scientific evidence existed to determine whether the two were associated. The institute is part of the National Academy of Sciences.

Previously, researchers lumped CLL with other forms of leukemia when looking at cancer rates among Vietnam

veterans. But this time the scientists examined rates of CLL separately, said Dr. Paul Engstrom, a member of the review committee and a vice president with Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia.

The scientists said although

CLL is a form of leukemia, it shares some similarities with Hodgkin's disease and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, two diseases that have long been associated with exposures to the chemicals used in Agent Orange and other defoliants.



CITY OF FARMINGTON SPECIAL STUDY SESSION (Summary)

A special study session of the Farmington City Council was held on Friday, January 31, 2003, in Council Chambers, 23600 Liberty Street, Farmington, Michigan. Notice of the meeting was posted in compliance with Public Act 207-1976.

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m. by Mayor Mitchell. PRESENT: Campbell, Harrison (arrived at 5:39 p.m.), McShane, Mitchell.

ABSENT: Bush.

CITY REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT: Clerk/Treasurer Cantrell, Director Goss.

OTHERS PRESENT: Roger Ratkowski of the Pasta Shop, Wayne Stanfield of Rally Partners, Inc., Susan Roush McClenaghan of Housing.

Council met to hear a presentation from Roger Ratkowski, Wayne Stanfield and Susan McClenaghan regarding a racing event. Meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

JAMES K. MITCHELL, Mayor
PATSY K. CANTRELL, City Clerk/Treasurer

Publish: February 9, 2003

CLF00070018

Arthritis Today

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FALLS FROM ARTHRITIS

Arthritis can be the cause for a fall. Usually the joint involved is the knee. The cause is osteoarthritis, and the immediate event is a sudden move such as you would undertake if you wanted to cross the street as the light turned from green to yellow.

Arthritis of the knee can cause your leg to buckle when stepping up a curb, out of a car, or down a step. In these circumstances, you are suddenly placing a large load onto one leg. The knee gives way not from pain but as a way to avoid it, the leg just doesn't support the strain.

Falls that occur while you are walking on level ground, and that come on with no warning and are not accompanied by pain in the hip, knee, or ankle before the fall, are not due to arthritis. The source of such accidents often are the heart. What has happened is that you have experienced a transient change in the rhythm of your heart. The effect was to temporarily decrease the flow of blood to the brain which caused you to experience a short lasting spell. The episode can be extremely brief, and leave you without the sense that you lost consciousness.

Often after the fall, you will have knee or ankle pain. In such an instance, the arthritis results from the injury, rather than being its cause. Do not be surprised when after listening to your experience, and examining you, your doctor does not order further x-rays. Instead he may arrange for you to wear a heart monitor to obtain a 24 hour record of the rate and rhythm of your heart.

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