Women’s Veteran Issues

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Female Specific Claims

• Review veterans records
• Many female specific issues may arise that seem ‘off’, but you may not think to discuss or claim for the veteran
• Many of these issues do not have a genetic component
• Following slide has the most common female specific claims the VA sees
Female Specific Claims

• Reproductive Issues that originated while on Active Duty
  • Menorrhagia (heavy menstrual cycles)
  • Amenorrhea (lack of menstrual cycle)
  • Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)
  • Endometriosis
  • Ovarian Cysts
  • Abnormal Pap Smears/Cervical Dysplasia
  • Cervical Polyps and Cysts
  • Hysterectomy (loss of a creative organ)
Other Diseases/Conditions

• Loss of pregnancies/Chronic miscarriages-May need medical opinion to solidify claim
• Chronic hormonal imbalance
• Chronic yeast infections

• It is necessary to review the medical records and discuss with the veteran to see if the condition is still chronic
Gulf War Syndrome

- Undiagnosed Illness/Multi-symptom Illness
  - Menstrual Disorders
    - Chronic menstrual cramping, heavy menstrual cycles that are not well managed by birth control or other prescription methods, difficulty maintaining pregnancies or getting pregnant, hormonal imbalances, unexplained weight loss/gain, lack of cysts or adhesions to explain pain.
    - Lack of diagnosis to explain pain, menstruation issues, and pregnancy issues.
    - May pair with Fibromyalgia pain/joint pain.
• In situations where a diagnosis is lacking or inconsistent in nature, a claim for Gulf War Syndrome is possible.

• Research specific to Women Veterans can be found here:
  http://www.publichealth.va.gov/epidemiology/publications.asp#women
Building Claims

- File an Intent to File

- Review the veteran’s record for treatment, diagnosis list, and interactions with medical staff.

- Discuss symptoms with the veteran.

- Refer the veteran to the VA Women’s Clinic for additional treatment to help build additional evidence, treatment, and updated diagnoses to show continuity of care.
Building Claims Cont...

• DoD has been limited in their care provided for women’s health until about 10 years ago, which has limited the diagnosis, care provided, and records available.
• In addition, the VA has only created Women’s Clinics in 2008, which became system wide in 2012.
• This has limited the strength of the records from both the VA and the military, which can weaken claims.
Building Claims Cont...

- Be as specific as possible, however, the records may be limited in diagnosis and quality.

- Due to the quality/quantity of the records, you may have to be somewhat vague in these claims as some of these issues do overlap, so you can simply claim, IE-Female Reproductive Issue, or Uterine Condition, or Heavy/Painful Menstrual Cycle.
Communication

• Women remain underserved in the VA system

• If you don’t feel comfortable having these conversation, please refer them to myself or a female CVSO-we will help!

• Many of these conditions, if left untreated, may cause lifelong issues
The VA continues to publish more research on female specific health conditions and military service.

These studies can be found at:
http://www.research.va.gov/programs/womens_health/
Claim Development

• Feel free to contact me for help developing your claims!

• File an IFT right away to give yourself time to develop your claim.

• Refer your female veteran to the Fargo VA Women’s Clinic at: 701-239-3700-9-3893
Questions?

Feel free to contact me with any questions!

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