

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3205

July 9, 2021

The Honorable Jon Tester
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Defense
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Defense
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Tester and Ranking Member Shelby,

We write to respectfully request that Defense Appropriations subcommittee support research on lymphedema and related diseases by including “*lymphatic diseases*” as conditions eligible for study within the Peer Reviewed Medical Research Program (PRMRP).

The lymphatic system is essential for a human being’s immune function and overall health, and there are a number of lymphatic diseases that especially affect our service members, such as secondary lymphedema, a disruption to the lymphatic channels or loss of lymph nodes caused by trauma, surgery or infection. Lymphedema can also occur due to abdominal, uterine, cervical, and prostate surgeries, as cancers including breast cancer and malignant melanoma. Treatments used for Hodgkin’s and non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma can also result in lymphedema. Our active duty service members are especially susceptible to developing lymphedema due to injuries that occur in the field or when receiving treatment for cancers, such as prostate cancer, which disproportionately affects men, who are 80% our active duty population. Further, the National Cancer Institute notes that incidence rates of breast and prostate cancers were higher in the military among both white and black service members. Service member are also at a higher likelihood of developing lymphatic filariasis (LF), the second most common parasitic disease worldwide. LF is transmitted through mosquitos, and our service members who are deployed across the world are at a higher risk.

It is imperative that in order to care for our service members, that we do everything in our capacity to improve our understanding and treatment of lymphatic diseases. Trauma, bacterial infections, burn pit exposure, and the complications of cancer treatment – all of which affect our service members at higher rates – can be antecedents for developing lymphatic diseases. Active service members are also exposed to occupational hazards such as asbestos, radiation, Chemical Agent Resistant Coating (CARC) paint and industrial solvents that can lead to lymphatic diseases.

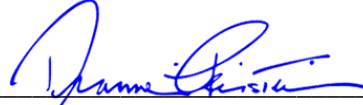
In recognition of the sacrifices our service members make, Congress must do its part to ensure that we are able to improve the quality of care that our men and women in uniform

receive. Including “*lymphatic diseases*” as eligible for study within the PRMRP would improve the longevity and livelihoods of our service members. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator