



January 7, 2014

Chairman Binns, distinguished members of the Research Advisory Committee, and members in attendance. My name is Ronald Brown and I serve as the President of the National Gulf War Resource Center.

I would like to speak to you about the Forgotten Warriors II Program. This program is a work in progress created with the purpose of helping the Veterans Administration to better serve the needs of us sick Desert Storm Veterans and to better the relationship between these Veterans and the Veterans Administration. One can find this program at [ngwrc.net](http://ngwrc.net) our sister site.

The NGWRC has set out to fix this by going to the veterans of Operations Desert Storm who are sick and asking them to help by telling what they felt were the main issues they found at the VA hospitals they used. The foremost issue that kept arising was a need for better education of the primary care physicians on the illnesses specific to service in the Gulf War.

A sick veteran should not have to educate their physician on their illnesses, the current research, or the programs available to them.

One example of this need for education of the physicians that recently happened was after a veteran had gone thru Dr.

Baraniuks' study and the results from the study were released, the veteran took them into his primary care doctor to share with them. The physician glanced over it, and threw it in the trash stating it was only 28 veterans who went through it. Well this veteran was one of the 28 those results were based on, so did it matter to this veteran? Yes it did.

Another example is when one of these sick Desert Storm veterans ask their primary care physician for a referral to the War Related Illness & Injury Study Center (WRIISC) which is a VA program originally set up for our sick veterans from Operation Desert Storm. Often, the primary care physicians tell them they do not have a clue what the program is, and when the veteran brings in a copy of the brochure on this program, the primary care physician then says it's only for our current veterans. Because the brochure now only mentions OIF/OEF veterans and TBI injuries, naturally the physicians do not think this program applies to the sick Desert Shield/ Desert Storm veterans. Unfortunately, this happens quite often.

I cannot tell you how many times I myself have had to take studies in to my doctors who had no idea that the research had even been done. Some were open to using them in the treatment of my illness; others never even bother to get around to reading them. Research is only good if the medical professional will take the time to read it and apply it. Only then will it perhaps help in the treatment of these sick veterans, but it should not fall to the veterans to have to bring these studies to the doctors.

The point here being why do we spend millions upon millions of dollars on research if the results are not read by our medical professionals and applied to treating the sick veterans? What

good does it do?

I would like to mention an example from my own experiences regarding a service connected illness many Desert Shield/ Desert Storm Veterans have. I suffer from severe Fibromyalgia. I asked my primary care doctor to be referred to Rheumatology for better treatment of my illness since they are the experts on this illness. I waited and waited, and I eventually got a letter from them stating there was nothing they could do for me and because of the current backlog of new patients, I would not be seen. Because of the backlog and inability of the VA to provide care for me on this issue, I have to travel to DC every 6 months, out of my own pocket, to be seen by Dr. Baraniuk who is a Rheumatologist. I can assure you I am not the only sick veteran this has happened to. I have spoken to many sick veterans from other VA hospitals that have had similar experiences. This expense is heartbreaking because I have to seek treatment outside the VA, at my own expense, for a service connected illness. The primary kind of issue that the VA was created to help veterans deal with.

Another issue Desert Shield/ Desert Storm Veterans have is with the guide to social workers that the VA uses. This publication lists all the medals for every war from World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, then it jumps to our current wars OIF and OEF. It has pictures of all the medals veterans of these wars are authorized to wear; however there is one missing. The **Operation Desert Storm awards** are not even listed in this VA manual. This is part of why this project is called the Forgotten Warriors II Program. Very often, as mentioned previously, within the VA Literature on available programs, health issues, and benefits, we are forgotten.

When our nation called on us we stepped forward without hesitation to do whatever our country asked us to do. Today, 23 years later, we are still fighting for adequate care because we became ill from our service in Operations Desert Shield/ Desert Storm and the veterans of Southern Watch.

The forgotten warrior II project is not about bashing the VA which is where many of us get our health care, it's about building a better relationship between the VA and the sick Desert Shield/ Desert Storm veteran. There is no room for finger pointing in finding a solution that benefits both parties. I do feel this can be achieved through better education of our primary care physicians on the illnesses we the Desert Storm veterans suffer from because no warrior should ever be forgotten no matter which war they served their country in.

Thank you for your time.

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