



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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VA Loma Linda Joins Nationwide Genomic Research Program

LOMA LINDA, Calif. – The VA Loma Linda Healthcare System today joined an unprecedented Veterans Affairs (VA) research program that promises to advance the sophisticated science of genomics. Researchers at VA Loma Linda are asking Riverside and San Bernardino County Veterans to learn more about the program and consider participating.

The Million Veteran Program (MVP) is a trailblazing VA effort to consolidate genetic, military exposure, health, and lifestyle information together in one single database. The database will be used only by authorized researchers with VA, other federal health agencies, and academic institutions within the U.S. –in a secure manner–conduct health and wellness studies to determine which genetic variations are associated with particular health issues. By identifying gene-health connections, the program could consequentially advance disease screening, diagnosis, and prognosis and point the way toward more effective, personalized therapies.

Launched nationally, MVP is expanding to achieve the goal of national participation by Veterans receiving VA care over the next five to seven years. Among those participating are VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki and Deputy Secretary W. Scott Gould.

“It is my honor to join with so many fellow Veterans in keeping VA at the leading edge of genomics research,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “This innovative research program will support VA’s mission to provide Veterans and their families with the care they have earned.”

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LOMA LINDA MVP 2/2/2

Patient safety and information security are the top priorities in MVP and all VA research initiatives. To protect Veterans' confidentiality, blood samples containing genetic material and health information collected for MVP will be stored in a secure manner and labeled with a barcode instead of personal information. The researchers who are approved to access samples and data will not receive the name, address, social security number or date of birth of participating Veterans. Importantly, the data will not move to the researchers, but rather researchers will come to the data—through the VA GenISIS computing environment—to increase security.

The program has been developed in close coordination with the VA Genomic Medicine Program Advisory Committee—comprised of private and public health, scientific, legal experts in the field of genetics and Veteran representatives—which advises the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and partners such as Veterans Service Organizations, the Department of Defense, and the National Institutes of Health.

“We have a research establishment that is embedded in an integrated health care system with a state-of-the-art electronic health record, fully equipped genomic laboratories with the latest in technology, and top-caliber investigators—most of whom also provide direct patient care,” said Dr. Joel Kupersmith, VA's chief research and development officer. “The merger of these distinct attributes—with the Veteran as a partner—make VA uniquely able to conduct this ground breaking genomic research.”

By enabling researchers to analyze and compare the DNA and other genetic materials of a population of Veterans potentially a million-strong, MVP represents a powerful tool in genetics research. For more information about MVP—including the stringent safeguards in place to protect the privacy and confidentiality of those Veterans who take part—visit www.research.va.gov/MVP.

To volunteer, Veterans may call 866-441-6075.