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## ISSUE BRIEF: Participation in Military Research Activities

[www.dha.org](http://www.dha.org)

### About DHA

The Digestive Health Alliance (DHA) is the grassroots arm of the International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders (IFFGD), a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. We are a community of individuals affected by Functional Gastrointestinal and Motility Disorders (FGIMDs); digestive conditions about which little is understood and few (if any) treatment options exist. Individually, the prevalence of these diseases and disorders varies, and some can be extremely rare, but taken as a whole they impact millions of Americans. Our strength is in our numbers, and it is for this reason that we stand up together and speak out with one voice to advance science, improve patient care, and end the suffering caused by FGIMDs.

### Functional GI Disorders, the Military Service Connection

The onset of a Functional GI Disorder can be triggered by severe stress and infections of the digestive tract. Deployed military personnel face an elevated chance of experiencing these risk factors and developing a Functional GI Disorder as a result of their service. The challenges of deployment and combat situations can be incredibly stressful, and digestive tract infections are common in areas outside the U.S. where living conditions may be less than ideal. The service connection of these conditions has been extensively studied and, most recently, a 2010 Institute of Medicine report, entitled *Gulf War and Health: Health Effects of Serving in the Gulf War*, identified Functional GI Disorders along with 3 other multi-symptom illnesses present in veterans as being associated to their service during the Gulf War.

The majority of Functional GI Disorders are painful, debilitating, and chronic. Long after a soldier's tour is over, and the stress or infection subsides, the Functional GI Disorder and its symptoms can remain. It is for this reason that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recognizes that there is a "presumption of service connection" for veterans suffering with Functional GI Disorders following their service during the Gulf War.

### Members of Congress Can Help

The Department of Defense (DOD) conducts important research into medical conditions that impact veterans and active-duty military personnel through its Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP). The annual Defense Appropriations Bill identifies and outlines which conditions the CDMRP should be studying for the fiscal year. Legislators from both chambers can request that the FY 2012 Defense Appropriations Bill includes language that directs the CDMRP to provide support for Functional GI Disorders research.

**House Representatives**—Currently, the U.S. House of Representatives, particularly the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, oversees the DOD CDMRP's Gulf War Illness Research Program. Considering that many soldiers developed Functional GI Disorders as a result of military service during the Gulf War, House Representatives must work to see that the FY 2012 Defense Appropriations Bill directs the CDMRP's Gulf War Illness Research Program to support Functional GI Disorders research.

**Senators**—Currently, the U.S. Senate, particularly the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, oversees the DOD CDMRP's Peer-Reviewed Medical Research Program. This program only conducts research into conditions that are identified as "eligible for study" within the annual Defense Appropriations Bill. Considering that Functional GI Disorders are recognized by the VA as disabling and connected to military service, Senators must work to see that "Functional GI Disorders" is included on the Peer-Reviewed Medical Research Program's eligible conditions list within the FY 2012 Defense Appropriations Bill.



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