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**Chapters – enter title of your first news item here**

You can use the first part of this newsletter template for your Chapter news to include any meeting recaps or agendas, local news, state legislative issues, and other matters for your members. Please replace “Chapter item 1” above with an applicable topic title.

**Chapters – enter title of your second news item here**

You can enter your second news item here and if you have any additional items you can copy the formatting and style for any other information you would like to share.

**DoD Report Shows Higher Cancer Rates for Aviators, Ground Crew Members**

*By: Karen Ruedisueli*

Military fixed-wing aviators and aviation support personnel face higher rates of certain cancers than the general population and were diagnosed with the disease at least dozen years earlier on average, according to a DoD [report to Congress](https://www.health.mil/Reference-Center/Reports/2024/05/09/Study-on-the-Incidence-of-Cancer-Diagnosis-and-Mortality) filed last month.

The results trigger a Phase 2 report to identify risk factors for the cancer diagnoses. That study, set to start in early 2025, also will determine the appropriate age to begin screening aircrew and ground crew for cancer based on a variety of factors including flying hours, length of service, and mission.

The report examined data for 138,505 aircrew and 659,985 ground crew. It included both active and reserve components, representing all military branches, and identified cancers diagnosed between 1992 and 2017.

Compared to a demographically similar U.S. population, aircrew had a 75% higher rate of melanoma, 31% higher rate of thyroid cancer, 20% higher rate of prostate cancer, and 15% higher rate of cancer for all sites combined. Ground crew members had a 12% higher rate of kidney and renal pelvis cancer but a 5% lower rate of all sites combined.

Data for the general population comparison was obtained from the Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) program of the National Cancer Institute, as directed by Congress.

The report noted a younger age at diagnosis for both aircrew and ground crew relative to the general population. The median age at diagnosis for malignant cancer of all sites was 55 years in aircrew and 54 years in ground crew. In contrast, the median age at diagnosis for malignant cancer of all sites was 67 years in the SEER reference population.

An [interim DoD report](https://www.health.mil/Reference-Center/Reports/2023/02/09/Study-on-the-Incidence-of-Cancer-Diagnosis-and-Mortality-among-Military-Aviators-and-Aviation-Support-Personnel) from February 2023 included only data for active component aircrew and ground crew. It was released while DoD collected additional data from the VA and state cancer registries for reserve component servicemembers.

DoD cancer registry and TRICARE claims data was used to assess cancer incidence among current and former (retired) aircrew and ground crew. The earlier report indicated active component aircrew and ground crew had a respective 24% and 3% higher incidence of cancer for all sites compared to a demographically similar general U.S. population.

 The earlier report also included an analysis of mortality rates and found that aircrew and ground crew had a 56% and 35% lower mortality rate, respectively, for all cancer sites compared to the demographically similar U.S. population in SEER.

Why do aircrew and ground crew members see higher cancer diagnosis rates with lower mortality rates? The report speculates the general population may not be screened for the disease as regularly as those in uniform, who “receive free medical care while in active duty service and must adhere to strict physical fitness requirements.”

MOAA appreciates Congress’ continued efforts to better understand toxic exposures and their impact on servicemembers and veterans.

**Check Out These July 4 Discounts for Servicemembers, Veterans, and Families**

*By:  Kevin Lilley*

Servicemembers, veterans, and their families can save big this Independence Day, with some deals lasting long after the last fireworks fly.

Check out our list below, which will be updated before the holiday. MOAA members have year-round savings through our affiliate partners; [learn more about those deals here](https://www.moaa.org/content/benefits-and-discounts/MOAA-exclusive-discounts/).

**Attractions**

**Blue Star Museums:** More than 2,000 museums, nature centers, zoos, and other attractions offer free admission to currently serving members and their families through Labor Day. [Learn more here](https://www.arts.gov/initiatives/blue-star-museums/frequently-asked-questions), and find participating venues [at this link](https://www.arts.gov/initiatives/blue-star-museums).

**Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden:** The Ohio venue offers free admission to all active and retired military members July 4. Military personnel may purchase up to six admission tickets at a discount for immediate family members. [Learn more here](https://cincinnatizoo.org/events/fourth-of-july-free-admission-for-military/).

**Columbus Zoo and Aquarium:** The Ohio venue offers a free day pass to "active and non-active members" of the military July 1-5, and the ability to purchase up to five additional passes for 50% off. Proof of service is required, and tickets must be purchased at the zoo's main gate. [Learn more here](https://www.columbuszoo.org/events/military-family-days).

**MGM Resorts:** Multiple locations will offer discounts through July 8 for servicemembers, veterans, and their spouses, to include Las Vegas hotels (Bellagio, Excalibur, Luxor, and others), Las Vegas entertainment (Mandalay Bay Shark Reef, Excalibur Tournament of Kings), and more. [Learn more here](https://www.mgmresorts.com/en/offers/military.html).

**Sun Splash Family Waterpark:** The Cape Coral, Fla., venue offers free admission to active and retired servicemembers July 4. Military ID required. [Learn more here](https://sunsplashwaterpark.com/).

**Retail**

**Academy Sports + Outdoors:**Military members, veterans, and first responders receive 10% off online and in-store purchases through July 6. Get eligibility details and more information [at this link](https://www.academy.com/military-and-first-responders).

**Duane Reed:**Servicemembers and families are eligible for 20% off eligible items July 4-7. A myWalgreens membership is required, and the discount covers in-store purchases only. [Click here for details](https://www.walgreens.com/topic/promotion/military-veterans-discount.jsp).

**Rack Room Shoes:** Servicemembers and families qualify for a 20% discount on in-store purchases July 4. The discount can be combined with some other sales. Military ID required at purchase. [Learn more here.](https://www.rackroomshoes.com/military-discount)

**Target:** Servicemembers, veterans, and families can get 10% off storewide on two purchases though July 6 using the retail chain's Target Circle program. Verification is required. [Click here for details](https://www.target.com/l/target-circle-military-appreciation/-/N-ydibb).

**Tractor Supply Co.:** TSC offers 10% off purchases on July 4 for members of its Neighbor's Club program who are Verified Hometown Heroes, a designation open to servicemembers, veterans, and immediate military family members. Hometown Heroes receive other benefits throughout the year, including discount coupons, free shipping, trailer rentals, and more. [Click here for details](https://www.tractorsupply.com/tsc/myaccount/herobenefits).

**Walgreens:**Servicemembers and families are eligible for 20% off eligible items July 4-7. A myWalgreens membership is required, and the discount covers in-store purchases only. [Click here for details](https://www.walgreens.com/topic/promotion/military-veterans-discount.jsp).

**MOAA Part of Public Workshop Informing Key Study of DoD Autism Care**

By: *Karen Ruedisueli*

A recent public workshop offered a forum for stakeholders, including MOAA, to weigh in on a report due next year assessing DoD’s Autism Care Demonstration (ACD) – a report which relies heavily on feedback from military families.

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine will conduct an [independent analysis of the ACD](https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2023-news-articles/advocacy/independent-review-will-examine-tricares-autism-coverage/), as mandated by the FY 2022 National Defense Authorization Act. The report, due out next summer, will assess the appropriateness of DoD’s methods for measuring the effectiveness of Applied Behavior Analysis – a key concern among many families enrolled in the ACD. It also would include a review of guidelines or industry standards of care adhered to under the demonstration project, among other priorities.

During the public comment period at the June 20 workshop, MOAA highlighted the role of military service organizations in advocating for changes in statute that allow TRICARE coverage policy to evolve with changes in technology, treatment protocols, and benchmarks established by high quality commercial plans and other government payers. MOAA reminded the National Academies committee of [recent testimony](https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/panel_1_joint_statement.pdf) from DoD leadership promising world-class health care to military families for servicemembers’ willingness to lay their lives on the line.

Other commenters provided emotional testimony about the impact ACD changes have had on their autistic children and their families. A military spouse told the committee about her decision – shortly after her husband deployed for the Afghanistan withdrawal – to purchase a [marketplace health plan](https://www.healthcare.gov/) so her son could have continuity of care when his ABA provider left the TRICARE network. Another wept as she described the role her son’s ABA provider played in helping him to successfully potty train at age 6 – [a service excluded](https://www.tricare-west.com/content/hnfs/home/tw/prov/autism-care-demonstration/exclusions.html) under the current iteration of the ACD.

The workshop featured invited presenters from the Drexel Autism Institute, University of Southern California, Vanderbilt University Medical Center, and the Michigan State University Autism Lab who provided perspectives on ABA research and clinical practice. Speakers also included leaders from ABA provider practices who highlighted challenges working with TRICARE relative to commercial payers and Medicaid.

A representative from the Defense Health Agency explained the importance of providing programmatic oversight of ABA care and the statutory limitations on TRICARE that have shaped ACD policies.

**Your Voice Matters**

While MOAA informed committee members that the association and other military advocacy groups are standing by to assist with the report and to protect the service-earned benefits of military families, those with ACD experience can play a more important role in the study.

MOAA urges these military families to consider attending – virtually or in-person – future public sessions with the committee. Families can also give feedback to the committee via the [online form](https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/7590917/Public-Feedback-Perspectives-on-Autism-Applied-Behavior-Analysis-and-DOD-s-Autism-Care-Demonstration). Check the [National Academies website](https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/independent-analysis-of-department-of-defenses-comprehensive-autism-care-demonstration-program) to sign up for updates on future events and study progress.