

Veterans Corner
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Purple Heart to Deceased POW

The Purple Heart will be presented posthumously to all prisoners of war who die in captivity. The legislation that makes this possible is Bob Filner's bill, the ***Honor Our Fallen Prisoners of War Act***, passed by congress in 2006. The Department of Defense announced its complete implementation in October 2008.

“The law now presumes that the death of all service members who die in captivity was the result of enemy action or the result of wound incurred in action with the enemy during capture and imprisonment”

“Before prisoners of war who dies during imprisonment of wounds inflicted by an instrument of war were eligible for posthumous Purple Heart recognition, but those who die of starvation, disease, abuse, freezing or other causes during captivity were not. There should be no false distinction indicating more courage or more sacrifice by some prisoners of war over others”

Each military department will publish application procedures and will ensure that the information is accessible to the general public. Family members with questions may contact the services: Army Military Awards Branch (703) 325-8700, navy Personnel Command Retired Records Section (314) 592-1150, Air Force Personnel Center (800) 616-3775, and Marine Corps Military Awards Branch (730) 784-9340.

VA Leads Way in studying care disparities

Consider the following trends noted in the government's latest National Healthcare Disparities Report:

- Low-income children are more likely than high income children to experience poor communication with their health-care providers.
- Older adults in the Asian Community are 50 percent less likely than whites to be immunized against pneumonia.
- American Indian and Alaskan native women are only half as likely as whites to receive prenatal care in the first three months of pregnancy.

Experts have long observed disparities in the health care received by different segments of the U.S. population. One of the biggest factors is lack of medical insurance; despite government programs such as Medicaid to help low-income adults and children about one in six Americans lacks any form of health insurance.

The reasons for disparities often go beyond economics and insurance. They can be complex and difficult to pinpoint. VA researchers lead the way in studying these issues. VA health care is generally seen as a “level playing field,” where access to care has to do

mainly with veteran status and not the ability to pay. Because financial barriers to care are minimized in this system, VA researchers are able to focus on other factors underlying disparities. They've studied patient-doctor communication and the attitudes of different racial or ethnic communities toward medical care, in general or with regard to specific procedures, and developed culturally targeted educational materials to ensure that patients are well-informed and able to make good decisions. They've also examined how family and social patterns affect veterans' abilities to care for themselves at home and stick with treatment regimens.

By shedding light on the factors that contribute to disparities, VA researchers are helping to improve care for veterans and all Americans.

From Joel Kupersmith, M.D., chief research and development officer for the veterans Health Administration.

OEF/OIF

As of September 30, 2008, there have been 71,465 New Yorkers who have served in the Iraq and Afghanistan Theaters of Operation, out of a total of 1.8 million overall. For New York, 51,820 or 73% are from the Active Duty components and 19,645, or 27% are from the Reserves/guard.

On September 30, 2008, there were 11,702 New Yorkers serving in the Iraq/Afghanistan Theaters out of 270,521 totals, with 8,521 or 73% from Active Duty components and 3,181 or 27% from the Reserves/Guard.

Widows pension/Compensation benefits

Under the Veterans Benefits Improvement act of 1996 the Law instructed the VA to treat disability and pension checks issued during the month of the veterans death "as being payable to the surviving spouse". Before the VA would request that the check be returned. A widow who thinks she did not get to keep that check should call 1-800-749-8387. The VA will need the Veterans social security number.