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'Women's Health Issues' Addresses Research, Policy Opportunities for Military Women's Health

Bethesda, Md. – A new supplement to the peer-reviewed journal *Women's Health Issues* will provide overviews of existing research on topics important to military women's health, ranging from sleep to sexual and reproductive health concerns. The supplement, published Aug. 25 and authored by experts at the Uniformed Services University (USU), will also identify where research and policy changes can improve health for this important population.

Women's Health Issues is the official journal of the Jacobs Institute of Women's Health, based in the Milken Institute School of Public Health (Milken Institute SPH) at George Washington University. The journal's supplement "Military Women's Health: Research Gaps and Opportunities" is sponsored by the TriService Nursing Research Program and the Military Women's Health Consortium at USU.

The first full-length article in the issue is authored by Air Force Col. (Dr.) Candy Wilson, deputy director of USU's PhD Nursing Science Program, and Dr. Lori L. Trego at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, and outlines the framework for the supplement and its subsequent articles. The article highlights a social ecological model for military women's health (SEM-MWH), and describes the influence of this model on individual health.

Wilson and Trego, the first author on the article, also discuss how the levels of an existing social ecological model apply to military women, such as a microsystem, which includes deployed settings where gynecologic care may be in short supply. They also describe a mesosystem, where military community social groups can provide information and social support, and an exosystem, where Department of Defense policies ensure care for all military members, but the hierarchical nature of the organization might make servicewomen concerned their health needs will be shared with their chain of command.

The supplement also consists of seven literature reviews that use the SEM-MWH framework to examine the existing research on military women's health in the following areas: sleep; adjustment disorders (the most common mental health diagnosis in the U.S. military); sexually transmitted infections; cervical cancer; unintended pregnancy; pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period; and breastfeeding. These reviews identify areas where additional research is needed to inform policy needs.

"A supplement of this magnitude was needed to support women as they forge new pathways in today's military," Wilson said. "The health of women is a readiness issue and identifying the health need gaps clarify research priorities. It is our hope that policy makers and researchers alike refer to our findings to inform their next steps in support of women."

The supplement “Military Women’s Health: Research Gaps and Opportunities” can be found online at [A Social Ecological Model for Military Women's Health \(usuhs.edu\)](https://www.usuhs.edu).

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