



HEADACHE ON THE HILL

FUND THE VA HEADACHE CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE

In June 2018, Veterans Health Administration (VHA) established the Headache Centers of Excellence (HCoE) program in accordance with VA Public Law 115-141 (Military Construction, VA, and Related Agencies Appropriation Act, 2018; Division J of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018), which provided \$10,000,000 for the creation of at least five headache centers.

HCoEs are charged with improving headache care quality, delivery, and access for Veterans living with headache. They also prioritize training and research. There are currently 27 Headache Centers of Excellence within the VHA but not all of these Centers are full hub sites. The need for speciality care for veterans experiencing headache is far greater than the current Centers can support.

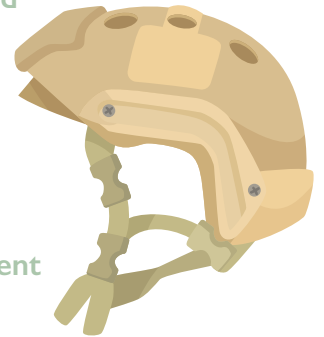
WE SEEK FUNDING TO EXPAND THE SITES & SERVICES OFFERED IN THE HEADACHE CENTERS IN FY26.

Headache disorders are prevalent in the veteran population, and studies show that veterans are more likely to develop migraine or other persistent headache disorders than civilians. Not surprisingly, migraine diagnoses increased by 27% among all branches of the armed forces from 2001 to 2007, according to a report by the Department of Defense, as a result of deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan. Moreover, post-traumatic headache was found to occur in up to 92% of military personnel who sustained a mild traumatic brain injury (TBI) and was associated with chronic daily headaches. Another study showed that 36% of veterans who had completed a 12-month deployment to Iraq were either diagnosed with or exhibited symptoms of migraine.

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among all branches of the armed forces from 2001 to 2007 as a result of deployment in Iraq and Afghanistan



92%

of military personnel with mild TBI have post-traumatic headache



36%

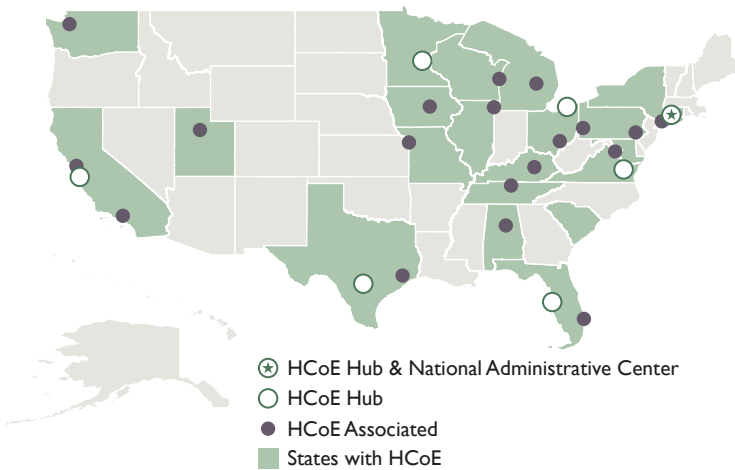
of veterans who completed a 12-month deployment to Iraq have migraine

ALLOCATE AT LEAST \$30,000,000 FOR THE HEADACHE CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE IN FY26.

As of fiscal year 2023, more than 1.99 million Veterans received headache care across more than 12.6 million visits for headache within VA Medical Centers. This represents 17% of the Veteran population receiving care within VHA.

The increase in headache seen within VHA has been associated with increased utilization of VHA in general, and more specifically among patients at highest risk for headache – women Veterans and Veterans with TBI/concussion. Additionally, because of the PACT Act, more Veterans than ever are using VHA for their healthcare.

Headache Centers of Excellence



HCoE hub sites have a full complement of multi-modal, interdisciplinary headache services including neurologists, health psychologists, clinical pharmacists, whole health/complementary and integrative health specialists, headache nurses, and rehabilitation medicine experts. Hub sites also provide telehealth care throughout their geographic catchment region. HCoE Associated sites are currently resourced to offer access to a Headache Medicine-trained neurologist and some components of interdisciplinary headache care but not the full range of services of a hub site.

Additional funding for the HCoEs would permit all HCoEs to be resourced to a hub level, thereby ensuring that all HCoEs will be able to provide the highest level headache care while increasing their ability to reach out into surrounding areas to improve headache care access.

2M Veterans received headache care within VHA Medical Centers

More women Veterans and Veterans with TBI & concussion use Veterans Health Administration



ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR THE HCOES WOULD PERMIT:

- Transition of one HCoE Associated site to HCoE hub site status, bringing the total number of Hub sites to 12
- Increase resource allocation to existing 15 HCoE Associate sites
- Add three more additional HCoE Associate site for a total of 30
- Formally establish an HCoE National Coordinating center to serve as a central hub within the Headache Centers of Excellence program to conduct, oversee, coordinate, and disseminate clinical, educational, research, quality improvement, healthcare operations, and technology initiatives throughout the HCoE in order to create a Headache Learning Health Care System intended to improve headache care quality, delivery, access, equity, experience, value, and outcomes for Veterans living with headache diseases.
- Create UCNS-headache medicine fellowships within the HCoE program

AHDA ASK:

Allocate at least \$30,000,000 for the VA Headache Centers of Excellence.