

# Ambulatory Visits Among Members of the Active Component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2011

This report documents frequencies, rates, trends, and characteristics of ambulatory visits of active component members of the U.S. Armed Forces during calendar year 2011. Ambulatory visits of U.S. service members in fixed military and non-military (reimbursed through the Military Health System) medical treatment facilities are documented with standardized, automated records. These records are routinely archived for health surveillance purposes in the Defense Medical Surveillance System which is the source of data for this report. Ambulatory visits that are not routinely and completely documented with standardized electronic records (e.g., during deployments, field training exercises, at sea) are not included.

For this report, all records of ambulatory visits of active component members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard in 2011 were categorized according to the first three digits of the primary (first-listed) diagnosis code

(per International Classification of Diseases, 9th revision, clinical modifications [ICD-9-CM]).

## Frequencies, rates, and trends:

During 2011, there were 19,845,248 reported ambulatory visits of active component service members (**Table 1**). The crude annual rate (all causes) was 13,621 visits per 1,000 service members; thus, on average, each service member had more than 13 ambulatory encounters during the year (**Table 1**). The rate of documented ambulatory visits in 2011 was 1.4 percent higher than in 2010 and 70.7 percent higher than in 2002 (**Figure 1**).

In 2011, approximately four of every nine (46.0%) ambulatory visits were for “other contact with health services” (**Table 1**). This category (indicated by “V-codes” of the ICD-9-CM) includes health care not related to a current illness or injury; such care includes counseling, immunizations, deployment-related health assessments,

routine and special medical examinations (e.g., periodic, occupational, retirement) and therapeutic and rehabilitative treatments for previously diagnosed illnesses or injuries (e.g., physical therapy). In 2011, four “V-coded” diagnoses accounted for the majority of the visits in this category: general medical examination (including deployment health assessments) (32.3%), care involving use of rehabilitation procedures (15.8%), encounters for administrative purposes (8.7%), and special investigations and examinations (including vision, dental, and gynecological exams) (6.9%) (**Tables 2,3**).

In 2011, there were 10,708,188 documented ambulatory visits for illnesses and injuries (ICD-9-CM: 001-999 (including relevant pregnancy V-codes)). The crude annual rate of illness- and injury-related visits was 7.3 visits per person per year (p-yr). The rate of ambulatory visits for illnesses and injuries in 2011 was 10.9 percent higher than in 2009 and 26.1 percent higher than in 2007 (**Table 1**).

**TABLE 1.** Ambulatory visits, ICD-9-CM diagnostic categories, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2007, 2009, and 2011

Major diagnostic category (ICD-9-CM)	2007			2009			2011		
	No.	No. per person	Rank	No.	No. per person	Rank	No.	No. per person	Rank
Other (V01-V82, except pregnancy-related)	6,613,517	4.72	(1)	8,188,669	5.57	(1)	9,137,060	6.27	(1)
Musculoskeletal system/connective tissue (710 - 739)	1,905,083	1.36	(2)	2,331,134	1.58	(2)	2,883,999	1.98	(2)
Mental disorders (290 - 319)	946,187	0.68	(4)	1,506,671	1.02	(3)	1,890,111	1.30	(3)
Signs, symptoms, ill-defined conditions (780 - 799)	843,060	0.60	(5)	1,002,164	0.68	(5)	1,101,063	0.76	(4)
Injury and poisoning (800 - 999)	973,575	0.70	(3)	1,011,236	0.69	(4)	991,465	0.68	(5)
Nervous system (320 - 389)	750,223	0.54	(6)	893,523	0.61	(6)	984,929	0.68	(6)
Respiratory system (460 - 519)	727,487	0.52	(7)	840,868	0.57	(7)	684,583	0.47	(7)
Skin and subcutaneous tissue (680 - 709)	383,913	0.27	(8)	408,289	0.28	(8)	404,782	0.28	(8)
Pregnancy and delivery (630 - 679, relevant V-codes)	350,141	0.25	(9)	366,308	0.25	(9)	381,581	0.26	(9)
Genitourinary system (580 - 629)	263,650	0.19	(11)	291,530	0.20	(11)	299,770	0.21	(10)
Digestive system (520 - 579)	286,560	0.20	(10)	296,577	0.20	(10)	299,754	0.21	(11)
Infectious and parasitic diseases (001 - 139)	255,544	0.18	(12)	279,740	0.19	(12)	240,330	0.16	(12)
Circulatory system (390 - 459)	173,348	0.12	(13)	186,951	0.13	(13)	193,528	0.13	(13)
Endocrine, nutrition, immunity (240 - 279)	136,187	0.10	(14)	145,348	0.10	(14)	153,997	0.11	(14)
Neoplasms (140 - 239)	121,389	0.09	(15)	135,683	0.09	(15)	141,036	0.10	(15)
Congenital anomalies (740 - 759)	27,883	0.02	(16)	29,525	0.02	(16)	29,830	0.02	(16)
Hematologic disorders (280 - 289)	20,314	0.01	(17)	24,997	0.02	(17)	27,430	0.02	(17)
Total	14,778,061	10.55		17,939,213	12.19		19,845,248	13.62	

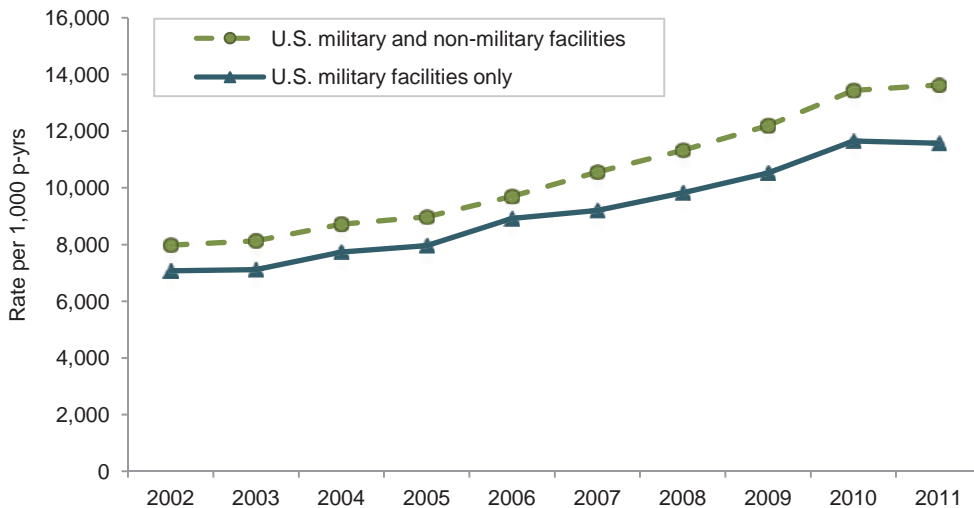
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**FIGURE 1.** Rate of ambulatory visits by year, by clinic type, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2002-2011



#### Ambulatory visits, by diagnostic categories:

In 2011, three major diagnostic categories accounted for the majority (54.9%) of all illness- and injury-related ambulatory visits among active component service members: musculoskeletal system/connective tissue disorders (26.9%), mental disorders (17.7%), and “signs, symptoms and ill-defined conditions” (10.3%) (Table 1).

From 2007 to 2011, there were increases in numbers of visits in all major diagnostic categories except respiratory system and infectious and parasitic diseases (Table 1). The largest percentage increases from 2007 to 2011 were for mental disorders (change in ambulatory visits, 2007-11: +943,924; +99.8%), and musculoskeletal system/connective tissue disorders (change in ambulatory visits, 2007-11: +978,916; +51.4%) (Table 1).

Over the past five years, the relative distributions of ambulatory visits by diagnostic categories of the ICD-9-CM remained fairly stable with a few exceptions. In relation to visits attributable to each of the 17 illness- and injury-related categories, between 2007 and 2011, injuries and poisonings decreased in rank order from third to fifth. Four categories increased in rank order: mental disorders (fourth to third), “signs, symptoms, and ill-defined conditions” (fifth to fourth), and genitourinary system (11th to 10th) (Table 1).

#### Ambulatory visits, by gender:

In 2011, males accounted for three-fourths (75.3%) of all illness- and injury-related visits; however, the annual crude rate was nearly twice as high among females (12.6 visits/p-yr) as among males (6.5 visits/p-yr). Excluding pregnancy and delivery-related visits (which accounted for 14.4% of all non-V-coded ambulatory visits among females), the non-V-coded ambulatory visit rate among females was 10.7 visits/p-yr. As in the past, rates were higher among females than males for every illness- and injury-related category (Figure 2).

The same three illness- and injury-specific diagnoses (at the 3-digit level of the ICD-9-CM) accounted for the most ambulatory visits among males and females (Tables 2,3). For each of the most frequently reported illness- or injury-specific diagnoses, the crude rate was approximately 50 percent higher among females than males: other/unspecified disorders of joints (rates [per 1,000 p-yrs], female: 836.3; male: 546.2; female:male rate ratio [RR]: 1.53); adjustment reaction (rates, female: 654.6; male: 439.0; RR: 1.49); and other/unspecified disorders of the back (rates, female: 613.9; male: 414.7; RR: 1.48). Three other specific diagnoses that were among the ten most frequently reported among both males and females were anxiety disorders, general symptoms, and disorders

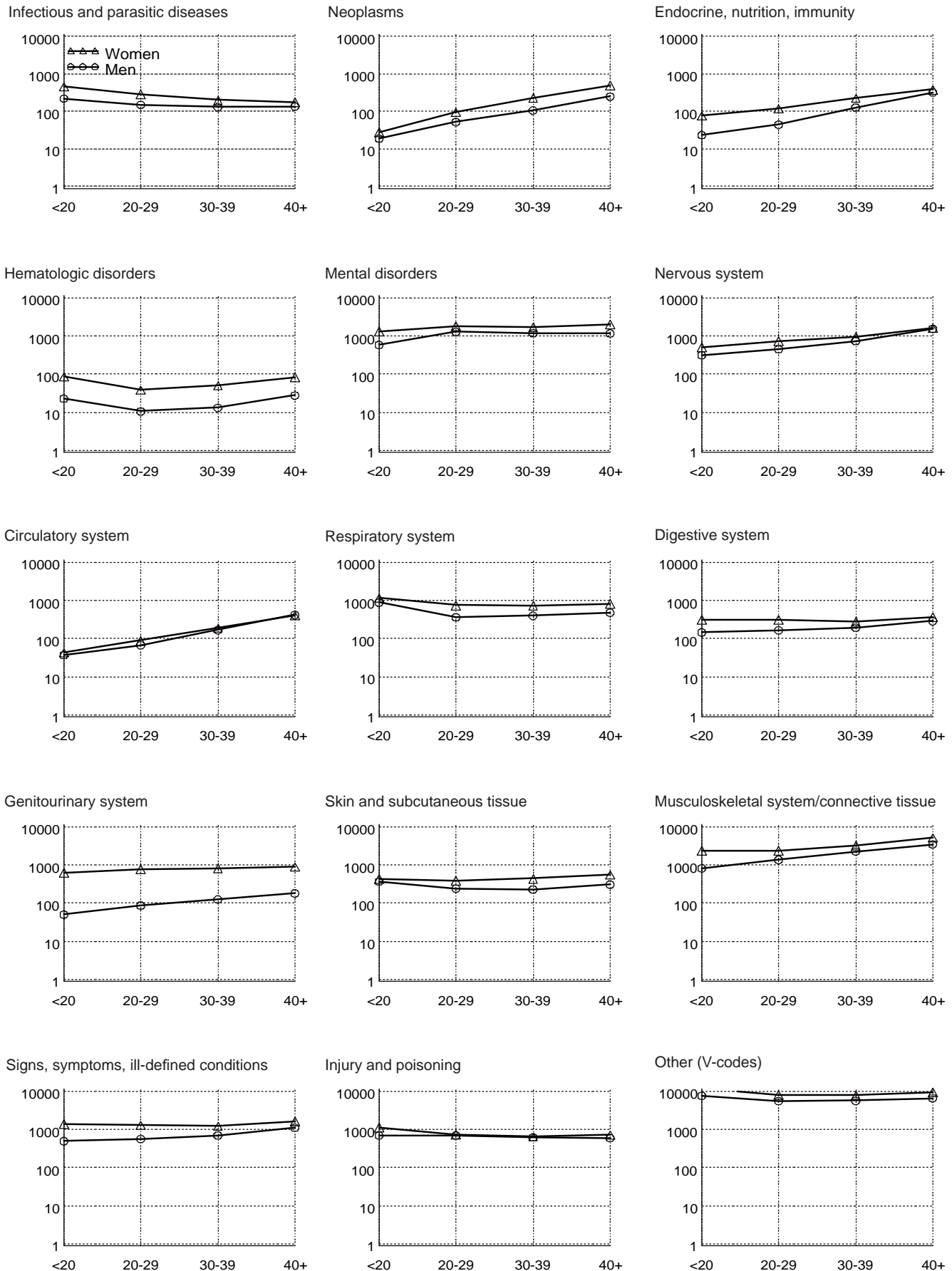
of refraction and accommodation. Three mental disorders among males (adjustment reaction, alcohol dependence syndrome, and anxiety disorders) and three among females (adjustment reaction, episodic mood disorders, and anxiety disorders) were among the ten most frequently reported illness- or injury-specific diagnoses during ambulatory encounters (Tables 2,3). Of note, “organic sleep disorders” was the fourth most frequent illness- or injury-specific primary diagnosis during ambulatory visits of males (Table 2).

Across diagnostic categories, relationships between age and ambulatory visit rates were generally similar among males and females (Figure 2). For example, among both males and females, ambulatory visit rates for neoplasms and circulatory disorders were more than 10 times higher among those 40 or older than those younger than 20 years old; in contrast, clinic visit rates for injuries and poisonings and infectious and parasitic diseases were generally lower among the oldest compared to younger service members. As in the past, clinic visit rates for genitourinary disorders were fairly stable across all age groups among females, but increased with age among males (Figure 2).

#### Dispositions after ambulatory visits:

Approximately 58.0 percent of all illness- and injury-related visits resulted in “duty without limitations” dispositions (Figure 3). Only one in 30 (3.1%) illness- and injury-related visits resulted in “convalescence in quarters” dispositions. The illness- and injury-related diagnostic categories with the highest proportions of “convalescence in quarters” or “limited duty” dispositions were diseases of the respiratory system (23.9%), injuries and poisonings (21.8%), diseases of the digestive system (20.2%), infectious and parasitic diseases (19.0%), and musculoskeletal system/connective tissue disorders (17.9%). Musculoskeletal system/connective tissue disorders and injuries and poisonings accounted for nearly two-thirds (63.7%) of all “limited duty” dispositions; diseases of the respiratory system accounted for nearly one-third (31.0%) of all “convalescence in quarters”

**FIGURE 2.** Rate (per 1,000 p-yrs) of ambulatory visits by major diagnostic categories, by age and gender, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2011



**TABLE 2.** Most frequent diagnoses during ambulatory visits by major diagnostic category, males, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2011

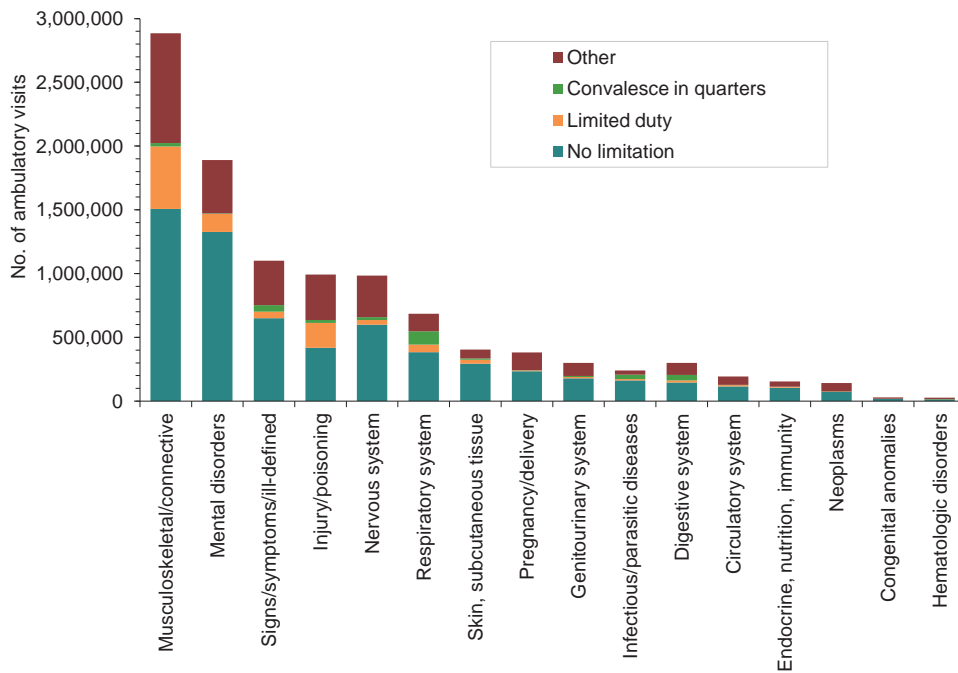
Diagnostic category (ICD-9-CM codes)	♂	No.	%	Diagnostic category (ICD-9-CM codes)	♂	No.	%
<b>Infectious and parasitic diseases (001 - 139)</b>		184,071		<b>Digestive system (520 - 579)</b>		234,179	
Other diseases due to viruses and chlamydiae		40,079	21.8	Other/unspecified noninfectious gastroenteritis/colitis		56,345	24.1
Viral and chlamydial infection		36,345	19.7	Diseases of esophagus		34,466	14.7
Dermatophytosis		28,381	15.4	Gastrointestinal hemorrhage		15,252	6.5
Streptococcal sore throat and scarlet fever		11,317	6.1	Inguinal hernia		14,089	6.0
Intestinal infections due to other organisms		11,302	6.1	Gastritis and duodenitis		12,912	5.5
<b>Neoplasms (140 - 239)</b>		107,107		<b>Genitourinary system (580 - 629)</b>		131,359	
Benign neoplasm of skin		17,389	16.2	Other disorders of male genital organs		25,986	19.8
Neoplasm of uncertain behavior of other/unspecified sites		15,901	14.8	Calculus of kidney and ureter		22,050	16.8
Neoplasms of unspecified nature		10,746	10.0	Other disorders of urethra and urinary tract		14,347	10.9
Lipoma		9,334	8.7	Orchitis and epididymitis		10,029	7.6
Other malignant neoplasms of lymphoid/histiocytic tissue		4,167	3.9	Male infertility		9,438	7.2
<b>Endocrine, nutrition, immunity (240 - 279)</b>		119,054		<b>Skin and subcutaneous tissue (680 - 709)</b>		315,578	
Disorders of lipid metabolism		35,989	30.2	Other cellulitis and abscess		56,135	17.8
Diabetes mellitus		19,745	16.6	Diseases of hair and hair follicles		46,018	14.6
Overweight, obesity and other hyperalimentation		14,977	12.6	Contact dermatitis and other eczema		45,470	14.4
Testicular dysfunction		9,885	8.3	Diseases of sebaceous glands		36,043	11.4
Acquired hypothyroidism		7,844	6.6	Diseases of nail		16,349	5.2
<b>Hematologic disorders (280 - 289)</b>		17,209		<b>Musculoskeletal system/connective tissue (710 - 739)</b>		2,276,865	
Other and unspecified anemias		4,353	25.3	Other and unspecified disorders of joint		680,788	29.9
Diseases of white blood cells		3,116	18.1	Other and unspecified disorders of back		516,879	22.7
Hereditary hemolytic anemias		2,646	15.4	Intervertebral disc disorders		152,740	6.7
Purpura and other hemorrhagic conditions		2,170	12.6	Peripheral enthesopathies and allied syndromes		142,756	6.3
Other diseases of blood and blood-forming organs		1,689	9.8	Other disorders of soft tissues		137,006	6.0
<b>Mental disorders (290 - 319)</b>		1,513,917		<b>Congenital anomalies (740 - 759)</b>		22,358	
Adjustment reaction		547,197	36.1	Certain congenital musculoskeletal deformities		5,811	26.0
Alcohol dependence syndrome		199,226	13.2	Other congenital musculoskeletal anomalies		3,462	15.5
Anxiety, dissociative and somatoform disorders		187,972	12.4	Congenital anomalies of the integument		2,936	13.1
Episodic mood disorders		150,790	10.0	Other congenital anomalies of limbs		2,866	12.8
Nondependent abuse of drugs		138,610	9.2	Congenital anomalies of urinary system		1,036	4.6
<b>Nervous system (320 - 389)</b>		803,223		<b>Signs, symptoms, ill-defined conditions (780 - 799)</b>		821,132	
Organic sleep disorders		219,298	27.3	General symptoms		200,532	24.4
Disorders of refraction and accommodation		155,977	19.4	Symptoms involving respiratory system		156,352	19.0
Pain, not elsewhere classified		45,204	5.6	Other symptoms involving abdomen and pelvis		97,979	11.9
Hearing loss		44,548	5.5	Symptoms involving digestive system		75,363	9.2
Disorders of conjunctiva		36,641	4.6	Symptoms involving head and neck		63,545	7.7
<b>Circulatory system (390 - 459)</b>		163,965		<b>Injury and poisoning (800 - 999)</b>		835,816	
Essential hypertension		70,695	43.1	Sprains and strains of ankle and foot		79,742	9.5
Hemorrhoids		17,954	10.9	Sprains and strains of knee and leg		78,826	9.4
Cardiac dysrhythmias		14,899	9.1	Sprains and strains of shoulder and upper arm		61,559	7.4
Varicose veins of other sites		5,573	3.4	Sprains and strains of other/unspecified parts of back		52,977	6.3
Other forms of chronic ischemic heart disease		4,678	2.9	Injury other and unspecified		51,785	6.2
<b>Respiratory system (460 - 519)</b>		518,899		<b>Other (V01-V82, except pregnancy-related)</b>		7,337,618	
Acute upper respiratory infections, unspecified sites		121,671	23.4	General medical examination		2,497,567	34.0
Allergic rhinitis		72,384	13.9	Care involving use of rehabilitation procedures		1,163,857	15.9
Acute pharyngitis		62,743	12.1	Encounters for administrative purposes		637,078	8.7
Chronic sinusitis		32,894	6.3	Special investigations and examinations		440,035	6.0
Asthma		28,875	5.6	Other persons seeking consultation		333,420	4.5

**TABLE 3.** Most frequent diagnoses during ambulatory visits by major diagnostic category, females, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2011

Diagnostic category (ICD-9-CM codes)	♀	No.	%	Diagnostic category (ICD-9-CM codes)	♀	No.	%
<b>Infectious and parasitic diseases (001 - 139)</b>		56,259		<b>Digestive system (520 - 579)</b>		65,575	
Viral and chlamydial infection		14,607	26.0	Other noninfectious gastroenteritis and colitis		18,681	28.5
Candidiasis		7,556	13.4	Functional digestive disorders not elsewhere classified		9,071	13.8
Other diseases due to viruses and chlamydiae		6,209	11.0	Diseases of esophagus		6,685	10.2
Dermatophytosis		4,718	8.4	Gastritis and duodenitis		4,724	7.2
Herpes simplex		3,921	7.0	Gastrointestinal hemorrhage		2,773	4.2
<b>Neoplasms (140 - 239)</b>		33,929		<b>Genitourinary system (580 - 629)</b>		168,411	
Benign neoplasm of skin		5,394	15.9	Pain/other symptoms of female genital organs		28,604	17.0
Uterine leiomyoma		4,834	14.2	Disorders of menstruation, abnormal bleeding		23,514	14.0
Neoplasm of uncertain behavior of other/unspecified sites		3,711	10.9	Other disorders of urethra and urinary tract		20,906	12.4
Malignant neoplasm of female breast		3,599	10.6	Inflammatory disease of cervix vagina and vulva		18,184	10.8
Neoplasms of unspecified nature		2,623	7.7	Other disorders of breast		12,772	7.6
<b>Endocrine, nutrition, immunity (240 - 279)</b>		34,943		<b>Pregnancy and delivery (630 - 679, relevant V-codes)</b>		381,581	
Acquired hypothyroidism		6,330	18.1	Normal pregnancy		125,524	32.9
Overweight, obesity and other hyperalimentation		6,208	17.8	Conditions complicating preg, childbirth, puerperium		38,873	10.2
Ovarian dysfunction		3,036	8.7	Other complications of pregnancy		33,778	8.9
Thyrotoxicosis with or without goiter		2,631	7.5	Postpartum care and examination		27,990	7.3
Disorders of fluid electrolyte and acid-base balance		2,525	7.2	Care or intervention related to labor and delivery n		13,330	3.5
<b>Hematologic disorders (280 - 289)</b>		10,221		<b>Skin and subcutaneous tissue (680 - 709)</b>		89,204	
Other and unspecified anemias		3,637	35.6	Diseases of sebaceous glands		18,502	20.7
Iron deficiency anemias		2,822	27.6	Contact dermatitis and other eczema		13,290	14.9
Purpura and other hemorrhagic conditions		1,020	10.0	Other cellulitis and abscess		10,145	11.4
Diseases of white blood cells		865	8.5	Diseases of hair and hair follicles		7,635	8.6
Hereditary hemolytic anemias		824	8.1	Other disorders of skin and subcutaneous tissue		6,467	7.2
<b>Mental disorders (290 - 319)</b>		376,194		<b>Musculoskeletal system/connective tissue (710 - 739)</b>		607,134	
Adjustment reaction		137,868	36.6	Other and unspecified disorders of joint		176,134	29.0
Episodic mood disorders		63,338	16.8	Other and unspecified disorders of back		129,309	21.3
Anxiety, dissociative and somatoform disorders		60,110	16.0	Other disorders of soft tissues		47,968	7.9
Depressive disorder not elsewhere classified		37,828	10.1	Nonallopathic lesions not elsewhere classified		38,282	6.3
Alcohol dependence syndrome		21,574	5.7	Peripheral enthesopathies and allied syndromes		33,233	5.5
<b>Nervous system (320 - 389)</b>		181,706		<b>Signs, symptoms, ill-defined conditions (780 - 799)</b>		279,931	
Disorders of refraction and accommodation		41,718	23.0	Other symptoms involving abdomen and pelvis		52,662	18.8
Migraine		26,321	14.5	General symptoms		46,172	16.5
Organic sleep disorders		13,045	7.2	Symptoms involving respiratory system		38,799	13.9
Pain, not elsewhere classified		11,244	6.2	Symptoms involving digestive system		31,394	11.2
Disorders of conjunctiva		10,268	5.7	Other abnormal histological/immunological findings		24,994	8.9
<b>Circulatory system (390 - 459)</b>		29,563		<b>Injury and poisoning (800 - 999)</b>		155,649	
Essential hypertension		9,262	31.3	Sprains and strains of ankle and foot		17,693	11.4
Hemorrhoids		4,012	13.6	Sprains and strains of knee and leg		17,180	11.0
Cardiac dysrhythmias		3,077	10.4	Sprains and strains of other and parts of back		12,911	8.3
Varicose veins of lower extremities		2,179	7.4	Sprains and strains of shoulder and upper arm		8,426	5.4
Other venous embolism and thrombosis		1,058	3.6	Injury other and unspecified		8,173	5.3
<b>Respiratory system (460 - 519)</b>		165,684		<b>Other (V01-V82, except pregnancy-related)</b>		1,799,442	
Acute upper respiratory infections		38,869	23.5	General medical examination		452,536	25.1
Allergic rhinitis		26,251	15.8	Care involving use of rehabilitation procedures		282,517	15.7
Acute pharyngitis		21,944	13.2	Special investigations and examinations		190,948	10.6
Chronic sinusitis		12,889	7.8	Encounters for administrative purposes		160,986	8.9
Asthma		11,569	7.0	Other persons seeking consultation		108,965	6.1



**FIGURE 3.** Ambulatory visits in relation to reported dispositions, by diagnostic category, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2011



dispositions – more than twice as many (n=104,108) as any other disease category (Figure 3).

#### EDITORIAL COMMENT

In the past five years, the distribution of illness- and injury-related ambulatory visits in relation to their reported primary causes has remained fairly stable. Of note, however, from 2007 to 2011, the numbers of visits that were documented with diagnostic codes indicating mental disorders nearly doubled. Thus, in 2011, mental disorders accounted for approximately 18 percent of all illness- and injury-related

diagnoses reported on standardized records of ambulatory encounters.

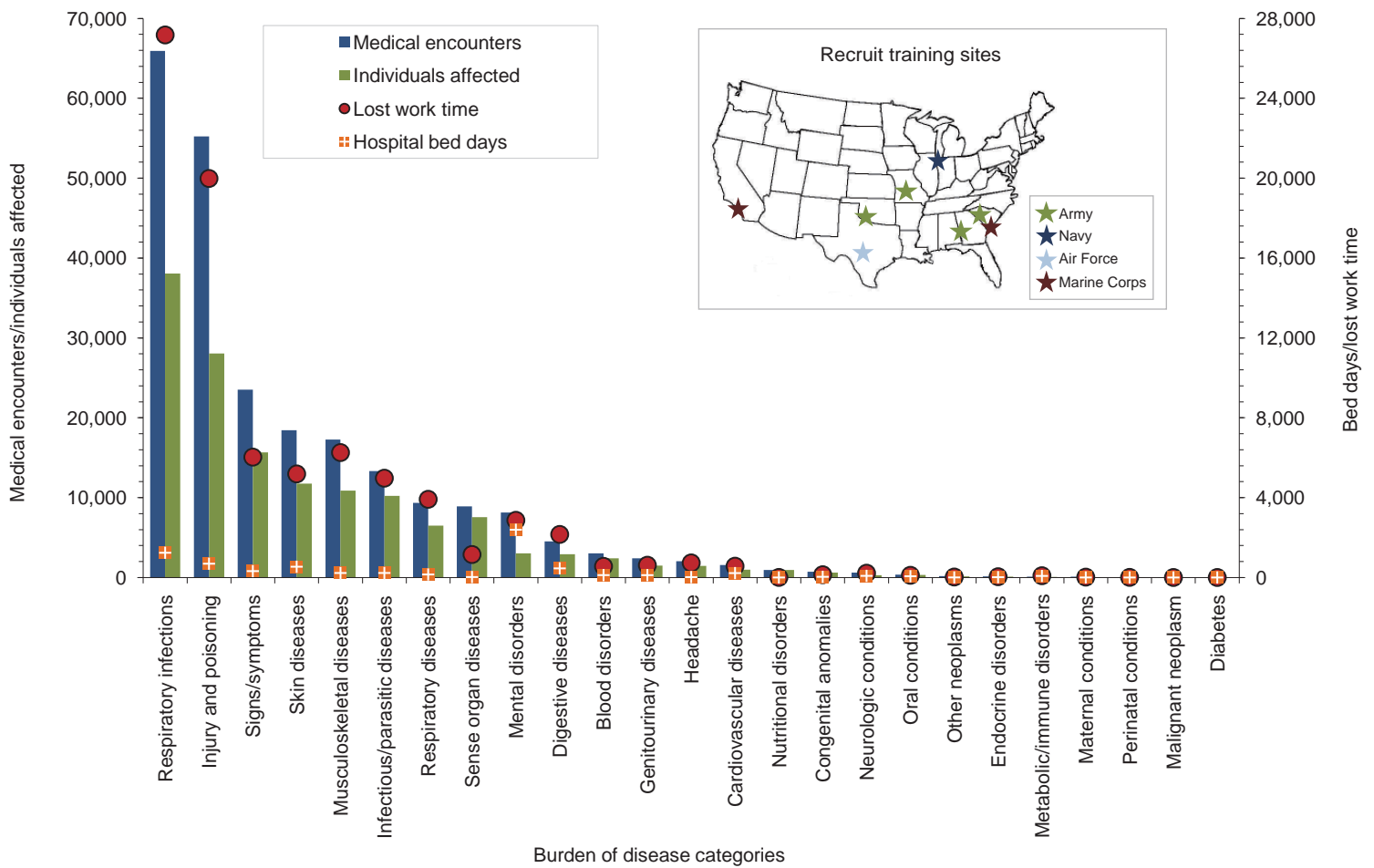
Between 2007 and 2011, the relative ranking of injuries and poisonings as primary causes of ambulatory visits declined. However, the military operational impacts of various conditions cannot be assessed by numbers of attributable ambulatory visits alone. For example, in 2011 injuries and poisonings accounted for approximately one of every 20 ambulatory visits overall but one in 10 ambulatory visits with duty-limiting dispositions. Of particular note in relation to injuries and musculoskeletal conditions, in 2011 as in the past, joint and back injuries/back pain accounted for extraordinarily large numbers of ambulatory visits

and lost duty time; resources should be focused on preventing, treating, and rehabilitating back pain/injuries among active component members.

The findings of this report should be interpreted with consideration of several limitations. For example, ambulatory care that is delivered by unit medics and at deployed (including in Afghanistan, Iraq, and at sea) medical treatment facilities may not be documented on standardized, automated records and thus not archived in the Defense Medical Surveillance System (the source of data for this report). In turn, this summary does not reflect the experience of active component military members overall to the extent that the natures and rates of illnesses and injuries vary among those who are deployed and not deployed. Also, this summary is based on first-listed (primary) diagnosis codes reported on ambulatory visit records. As a result, the summary discounts morbidity related to comorbid and complicating conditions. Also, the accuracy of reported diagnoses likely varies across conditions, care providers, treatment facilities, and clinical settings. While specific diagnoses during specific encounters may not be reliable, summaries of the frequencies, natures, and trends of ambulatory encounters among active component members overall are informative and potentially useful. For example, the relatively large and sharply increasing numbers of ambulatory visits for mental disorders in general, and the large numbers of visits for organic sleep disorders among men, reflect patterns of responses by the Military Health System to the effects of combat and deployment-related stresses on active force members.

# Surveillance Snapshot: Illness and Injury Burdens Among U.S. Military Recruit Trainees, 2011

Medical encounters, individuals affected, hospital bed days, and lost work time<sup>a</sup>, by burden of disease category<sup>b</sup>, among recruit trainees<sup>c</sup>, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2011



<sup>a</sup>A measure of lost work time due to bed days, convalescence, and one-half day for each ambulatory visit that resulted in limited duty

<sup>b</sup>Burden of disease categories are the same as those used for analyses of morbidity burdens in the active components overall (see pagew 4-9).

<sup>c</sup>Recruit trainees are defined as active component members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, or Marine Corps with a rank of E1 to E4 who served at one of eight basic training locations (inset) during a service-specific training period following a first-ever personnel record.