

Abstract

**Asia Pacific Military Medicine Conference
Seoul, Republic of Korea, 6-10 April 2009**

Deployment Health Surveillance Program – results of the Solomon Islands study

Christine McClintock, Michael Waller, Annabel McGuire, Colleen Loos, Lisa Nielsen, Alexander McFarlane, Annette Dobson, Susan Treloar, Cate D'Este.

This first study in the Australian Deployment Health Surveillance Program aimed to assess health outcomes for Australian Defence Force (ADF) members associated with deployment to the Solomon Islands in OP ANODE. Health outcomes included mortality and cancer, mental health, general health and health risk factors.

The 2007 study involved Solomon Islands veterans who deployed between July 2003 and December 2005, a frequency matched comparison group who were eligible to deploy but did not and comparison to population norms where available.

Data sources included a self report questionnaire, Defence health assessments and psychological screens (n=1000), the National Death Index and national cancer data (n=8181). Solomon Islands veterans also completed a questionnaire on factors from the deployment experience that could impact on health.

Compared to Australian norms the combined veteran and comparison group had lower mortality rates (SMR 42.8 (23.4, 71.8)), similar smoking prevalence but evidence of more frequent alcohol consumption (Weekly or more SR1.22, 9 (1.08, 1.38)). The most commonly reported exposures related to the local environment (loud noises (66%), insect bites (66%) and exposure to pesticide fogging or spraying (60%)) and common stressors were organisational issues (58-70%) and absence from home (58-62%).

As anticipated, due to small numbers and short follow up period no statistically significant differences were detected in outcome measures (mortality, cancer, mental health, general health and health risk factors) of ADF personnel who deployed compared to those who did not. Further comparisons will be undertaken when the larger Bougainville and East Timor studies are completed.