

AMMA Conference
Communication technologies and response in deployment health studies

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Response rates are critical to the validity of survey based research. In recent years it has become more challenging in general populations and particularly in Defence populations to achieve adequate response rates. One of the primary challenges of the Deployment Health Surveillance Program (DHSP) is achieving suitable response rates to the self-reported data collection component of the research. This challenge is not unique to Australian Defence populations and has been faced by both UK and US researchers in health surveys of deployed personnel.

Many factors contribute to low response rates including: survey fatigue; generational change in attitudes towards participation for public good; privacy concerns; and restrictions on some of the methods used to encourage participation (reimbursement or reward). The recruitment strategy is key to maximising the response in light of these other factors, most of which are outside the influence of the research team.

This presentation will summarise findings on different contact strategies and the outcomes of each. Strategies include mail out of questionnaires, mail out of preliminary invitations, telephone contact and email contact.

The results will be profiled by age group, service and currently serving versus ex-servicing groups. The key to cost effective recruitment in the DHSP is the best combination of contact strategies.