

Title:

The Defence Deployed East Timor Health Study: Overview of findings

Author(s):

Susan Treloar¹, Annabel McGuire¹, Christine McClintock¹, Michael Waller¹, Jonathan Bleier¹, Lisa Nielsen¹, Colleen Loos¹, Peter Nasveld¹, Annette Dobson^{1,2}

Presenter(s):

Susan Treloar

Abstract

(to be no longer than 500 words)

Background

The Defence Deployed East Timor Health Study is part of a series of studies aiming to research the health and well-being of Australian Defence Force (ADF) veterans who have deployed on active service overseas. The studies are being conducted by the Centre for Military and Veterans' Health (CMVH) as part of the Deployment Health Surveillance Program (DHSP).

Aims

The aim of the DHSP is to examine the physical, emotional and environmental effects of deployment in order to identify, prevent and manage health care needs of current and former ADF members. The aim of the East Timor Health Study was to investigate the health status of Australian Defence Force personnel who deployed to East Timor relative to a frequency matched comparison group who did not deploy.

Methods

The study was conducted in 2007-2008. It included analysis of data gathered from mortality and cancer incidence registries, a comprehensive self-reported questionnaire, and health and psychology records retained by the ADF. A random sample of 3999 ADF personnel from the 19710 who deployed to East Timor between June 1999 and May 2005 as part of Operations FABER, SPITFIRE, WARDEN, TANAGER, CITADEL and SPIRE were invited to participate. A comparison group of 2501 individuals who were eligible to deploy to East Timor, but did not, were also invited to participate. Participation involved completing a questionnaire on current physical and mental health and another on a range of potential exposures and stressors associated with their deployment. Consent was sought to link questionnaire information to ADF medical and psychological screening records. Response was obtained from 43% of the living sample. Because the operations varied substantially in nature over time, comparative analyses of health status for personnel who deployed on the early and late operations over the period were possible.

Results

We present an overview of key health findings from the different East Timor study components. We focus particularly on results of deployed versus comparison group analyses, the early versus late deployments, differences between Services and between currently serving and ex-serving respondents.

Conclusions

Findings are interpreted in the light of methodological advantages and limitations, comparable international studies, and implications for prevention and service delivery.

Authors Affiliations:

¹ Centre for Military and Veterans' Health, The University of Queensland, Mayne Medical School, Herston Road, Herston QLD 4006.

² School of Population Health, The University of Queensland

Corresponding author's email:

Susan Treloar: s.treloar@uq.edu.au