

# **Mortality and deployment in a large cohort of Australian Defence Force personnel**

**Michael Waller**<sup>1</sup>, Catherine D'Este<sup>2</sup>, Lisa Nielsen<sup>1</sup>, Ruth McLaughlin<sup>1</sup>, Christine McClintock<sup>1</sup>, Annabel McGuire<sup>1</sup>, Christopher Barton<sup>3</sup>, Susan A Treloar<sup>1</sup>, Alexander MacFarlane<sup>3</sup>, Annette Dobson<sup>1</sup>

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

2 Centre for Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics, The University of Newcastle, Level 3, David Maddison Clinical Sciences Building, Royal Newcastle Hospital, Newcastle NSW 2300

3 Centre for Military and Veterans' Health, School of Population Health and Clinical Practice, The University of Adelaide, 122 Frome Rd, Adelaide SA 5005

Three current military and veterans' health studies, focusing on deployments to the Solomon Islands (SI), East Timor (EM) and Bougainville (BV), aim to collect self-report and Defence health data from deployed and non-deployed serving personnel and exposure data relating to each deployment. These three studies will serve to recruit participants to a larger cohort, the Near North Area of Influence (NNAI) cohort, as part of the Deployment Health Surveillance Program (DHSP) in the Centre for Military and Veterans' Health.

In total 45936 participants have been recruited into the NNAI study. These include the veterans of NNAI operations and frequency matched comparisons.

An important part of these health studies is the availability of mortality and cause of death data for the entire NNAI cohort from the National Death Index from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. We compare death rates in the NNAI cohort with death rates in the general population. We discuss mortality findings in the context of the "healthy soldier effect", a special case of the healthy worker effect in studies of military personnel. We describe patterns of mortality in the NNAI cohort according to each of the specific deployments and the number and combinations of deployments versus no deployment.

## **Key Words**

health surveillance, military, veterans, cohort, mortality