

Title: Analysis of Health Symptoms of Australian servicemen who served in the Solomon Islands

Author(s): Michael Waller¹, Annabel McGuire¹, Cate D'Este²

Presenter(s): Michael Waller

Abstract

Introduction

A number of international studies have reported on the prevalence and patterns of health symptoms in military populations deployed to different locations. A cross-sectional study of Australian Defence Force (ADF) deployment to the Solomon Islands between July 2003 and December 2005 was used to assess the reported health symptoms in this sample.

Methods

500 Solomon Islands veterans and 500 ADF members who were in the military at the same time who did not deploy to the Solomon Islands (comparisons) were invited to take part in a health questionnaire. Both study cohorts were selected using stratified random sampling. The overall response rate for the health survey was 44%. The veteran and comparison groups were asked to complete a symptoms checklist, which consisted of 61 items. This study compares the health symptoms of the veterans against those of the comparison group. The symptoms are ranked in order of frequency and then represented graphically to assess differences between the deployed and the comparison group.

Results

Overall the Solomon Islands veterans did not report symptoms and disorders more than the comparison cohort. The symptom which showed the greatest difference between the Solomon Island veteran and comparisons was Fatigue (OR = 1.47 (0.99, 2.19) $p = 0.06$). However, none of the 15 symptoms presented were significantly associated with deployment to the Solomon Islands.

Conclusions

Deployment to the Solomon Islands did not appear to result in an increased frequency of reported health symptoms. The results are discussed in the context of international studies of different deployments which have utilized the same techniques.

Authors Affiliations:

1. University of Queensland (Dr Annabel McGuire and Mr Michael Waller)
2. University of Newcastle (Prof. Cate D'Este)

Corresponding author's email:
m.waller@uq.edu.au