

Families and the Middle East Area of Operations (MEAO) Health Study

By Professor Sandy McFarlane

The Centre for Military and Veterans' Health (CMVH) is undertaking a Middle East Area of Operations (MEAO) Health Study and we are seeking the assistance of families of ADF personnel and veterans who have recently deployed, or will deploy, to the Middle East to encourage members to complete the MEAO health surveys as part of the Study.

Our experience with ADF personnel and veterans is that it is often their husbands and wives who are the ones who take the major responsibility for the health of the ADF personnel and veterans in their family. That is why we are appealing for their help.

One of the challenges with this type of research is that some members of the ADF have a robust view of their own health and are relatively unconcerned about any health risks that they have or may have in the future, which could be to their long-term detriment.

The Study aims to get a clear picture of the benefits and risks associated with the particular experiences of deployment, exposure to potentially harmful agents, and to highlight the assistance that ADF personnel and veterans might be able to access on return from their MEAO deployment.

As many of the MEAO personnel and veterans as possible need to complete the surveys to ensure that the most comprehensive capturing of the health impacts of deployment is gathered, including those personnel and veterans who have no health complaints.

The information gathered from the initial surveys as part of the Study will be followed up with ongoing surveys in coming years to get the most comprehensive picture of the health and well-being of deployed personnel over time.

The second stage of the MEAO study will look at ADF members before they go to the Middle East and then on their return, with some participants being asked to undertake physical, biological and metabolic studies.

We look forward to the support of families of ADF personnel and veterans who have deployed, or will deploy, to the MEAO to encourage completion of these surveys - for the benefit of ADF personnel and veterans, their families, and the ADF more generally.

Defence continues to make a significant contribution to the health and welfare of ADF members by funding a series of studies that aim to better understand the benefits and risks associated with deployment to the MEAO.

The CMVH sits outside of Defence. All participants can be assured of complete confidentiality and that none of the information about specific individuals will be made available to anyone within the Defence system.

The MEAO Health Study is due to begin in early 2010.

Contact: Professor McFarlane
Phone: 08 8303 5364
Email: alexander.mcfarlane@adelaide.edu.au
CMVH Website: www.cmvh.org.au