

ADF HEALTH

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Caring for people

Defence health personnel have an outstanding record of caring for sick and injured members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) in Garrison or on deployed operations. Defence Health personnel also provide humanitarian assistance including health care to the local civilian population on overseas operations and help to win their 'hearts and minds'. ADF Health personnel are great ambassadors for the ADF and Australia.



Another very important role for our Health Personnel is to ensure that our combat medics and soldiers are able to provide high level combat first aid care on the front line for missions overseas. This has been very important in Afghanistan where improvised explosive devices (IED's) have caused fatalities and serious injuries in remote, austere environments. All of the soldiers who deploy are receiving combat first aid training at a high level with rehearsal scenarios and realistic training delivered by senior experienced Reservists and permanent ADF staff. Our Royal Australian Airforce personnel are caring for our wounded soldiers on return flights from Afghanistan via Germany on our C17 transport aircraft, and in doing so are providing continuous intensive care during the flight. All of this advanced and timely care saves lives and improves outcomes. Much thought is going in to develop our new Concepts of Operation (CONOPS) based on the current evidence base, learning the lessons from past missions and incorporating new concepts of care which have been used successfully by our coalition partners. We also have senior Reservists working closely with our ADF staff to treat and rehabilitate our injured soldiers on their return from Afghanistan and other overseas operations. The exciting developments of expanded and better integrated services in defence mental health and rehabilitation services will go a long way towards maximising the recovery of our injured soldiers.

Defence Health personnel are deployed on many of our overseas operations including Afghanistan, Solomon Islands, Timor and more recently in the Punjab region of Pakistan. Reservists play a vital role in all of these operations. The ADF with the support of AusAID had provided assistance to

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It is part of our duty as ADF Health Professionals to promote occupational health and safety and preventive health measures in our day-to-day work and to support and help deliver the policies of the senior leadership in the ADF.

more than 5,000 people affected by the Pakistan floods by the end of September 2010. Camp Cockatoo, the Australian base and field hospital 80 kilometres north west of Multan is home to more than 170 defence and AusAID personnel. We will in the future see increased deployment of combined civilian (State Government) disaster teams, Department of Foreign Affairs officers, other public servants, and ADF military health, engineering and logistic personnel providing comprehensive support in disaster zones. It is great to see civilian health and logistic personnel working closely with their ADF colleagues in disaster zones such as Pakistan. Clearly the rapid lift and deployment capability of the ADF is essential in ensuring rapid disaster response. This complements the already close relationship between Defence and the Australian Federal Police in many of the operations which have occurred in our peacekeeping operations over the last decade.

There is also currently a major focus on preventive health throughout the Australian Defence Force and this has particularly been brought home by our senior officers including Chief of Army (CA) who has recently spoken publicly about men seeking timely preventive health measures including painting his face blue to remind men to 'face up to' taking their health seriously and changing how they approach illness. CA makes the important point that Cancer kills more men each year than soldiers in combat. CA has changed the regulations on wearing berets because he is rightly concerned about the risk of skin cancer in our personnel who are often exposing themselves to the sun for many hours in the day. The brimmed Army hat (HKFF) provides much more protection than the beret. The RSM of the Army WO1 Stephen Ward has been promoting the new policy

and explaining it to members who still stubbornly wish to wear the berets. Members of the ADF have to realise that the ADF has a 'duty of care' towards them which includes preventive health measures. It is part of our duty as ADF Health Professionals to promote occupational health and safety and preventive health measures in our day-to-day work and to support and help deliver the policies of the senior leadership in the ADF.

In this issue of ADF Health there are a number of informative articles including McKenzie's review of heat stroke. Clearly this has implications for life-saving preventive health measures. Wishaw's article on hypothermia also has strong implications for preventive health policy as well as therapy for those affected. Our personnel do frequently work out in the field in environmental extremes and health personnel working with them need to educate these personnel and their commanders about the issues of prevention and treatment of heat stroke and hypothermia.

AVM Short presents an interesting article on war and disease and from this there are many historical lessons which can inform health personnel and the military leadership of today. The book he reviews on the extraordinary work of our personnel in Rwanda following the genocide shows how our people were caring for the weakest and poorest humans in the worst of circumstances. It is a powerful story indeed. Ellis provides an informative article based on the Afghanistan experience to highlight the modern principles of treating battle casualties exposed to bomb blast and other penetrating trauma. No doubt this level of high quality care provided to our personnel in Afghanistan from the point of wounding back to Australia is saving lives and reducing morbidity and future suffering.

Thank you to all our readership for your ongoing service to the ADF and the nation. It is much appreciated. I wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Please keep the articles flowing to 'ADF Health'. We do need more articles. This is your journal. Please support it.

Jeffrey V Rosenfeld

MAJGEN

Surgeon General Defence Health Reserves

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