

Research@DVA

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 2

AUTUMN 2010 (EXTERNAL EDITION)

Department of Veterans' Affairs

Emerging topics for DVA research

From the DVA Research Team:

- *Next DVA Research Seminar: 17 March*
- *Next round ARP funding applications: submit by 7 April*
- *Next DVA Ethics Committee submission date: 31 March*

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DVA's client demographics are changing.

The traditional population base (those who volunteered or were conscripted to service in wartime and their dependants) is declining in numbers as the WW2 and Korea veterans get older.

New client groups are emerging of younger members who have chosen service with the Australian Defence Force as their career or who offer regular service as reservists. The number of women in the ADF is also growing and they are taking up a wider range of military occupations. Larger numbers of both women and reservists are being deployed than in the past. In addition, a rising number of families have two parents serving in the ADF.

These shifting demographic and service patterns have resulted in DVA's client base changing in its make-up, needs and expectations.

To prepare for the future, DVA's research agenda needs to recognise and accommodate this change. As a result, the Department has identified the following emerging issues that require research:

- Younger veterans and peacekeepers;
- Multiple deployments;
- Female veterans; and
- Reservists.

DVA funds research through the Applied Research Program (ARP).

If you have an idea for an ARP research project relevant to one of the emerging issues above, contact the Strategic Research Development (SRD) Section for advice about application processes, on (02) 6289 6410 or

research@dva.gov.au

You will need a DVA business area to sponsor and manage the project as part of completing your funding application.

SRD can assist by putting you in touch with the right people but please contact us several weeks before you plan to submit the application to allow plenty of time for the necessary discussions.

The next two funding rounds close on 7 April and 6 July 2010. A total annual budget of \$2M is allocated to the DVA ARP.



Next funding round closes 7 April

Mental Health Research Seminar

DVA's final Research Seminar for 2009 was held on 18 November. The theme was 'Interventions for Mental Health' and staff from the Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health (ACPMH) gave presentations to a diverse and interested audience about three DVA-funded studies that are currently underway.

You served your country. How are you travelling now?

Andrea Phelps, ACPMH

This study aims to improve mental health treatment options for potential clients who are difficult to engage through traditional methods.

Targeting the Barwon South-Western Health Region in Victoria, the initiative focused on known barriers to care to develop and trial innovative ways of encouraging veterans and former serving members to seek help with mental health problems.

The initiative included: awareness raising, community meetings with the opportunity for one-to-one counselling and assertive provider outreach.

The trial was designed and implemented in partnership with local providers of mental health care to veterans and with the support of local ex-service organisations.

The results of the trial were not available at the time of the seminar but will be measured by the number of people making contact, attending the community meetings, asking for help and registering with mental health service providers during the trial period.

Implementation of PTSD best practice in VVCS

Anne-Laure Couineau, ACPMH

This project investigates the individual and organisational barriers and incentives to adopting best practice for treatment of

PTSD. It also assesses a model for building a sustainable work-force capacity for promoting best practice.

The study aims to test whether practitioners' beliefs such as a perceived lack of knowledge, resource limitations and tensions between guidelines and policy may affect their choices about using recommended practices.

Twenty counsellors from VVCS completed prospective self-report surveys and recorded their actual practices. Information gathered is being used to evaluate the success of the model.

The main implementation strategies were selected based on barriers identified by teams and facilitators and followed the principles of social cognitive (learning) theory.

Lessons learnt from this study include:

- the need for research to be about the use of evidence in the real world;
- the need for practitioners (and clients) to be involved in generating strategies to use the knowledge;
- transparency and allowing debate;
- the importance of predictive models; and
- the importance of teams, management support, and the role of external facilitators.

Cognitive Processing Therapy

Delyth Lloyd, ACPMH

This project involves training counsellors from three VVCS sites to administer Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT, a 12-session cognitive behavioural treatment for PTSD) to veterans.

The project aims to test whether the combination of a skills workshop and ongoing supervision is an effective method for training VVCS counsellors in CPT treatment and whether this evidence-based intervention can be delivered in the naturalistic setting of VVCS centres.

It also examines the effectiveness of CPT as a potentially potent treatment for combat-related PTSD in Australian veterans.

Eighteen VVCS counsellors are involved with half providing CPT and half providing usual treatment to 54 veterans with PTSD.

The pilot training and supervision has been well received and the model has been improved for future roll-out.

The results are expected by March 2010 and it is anticipated the study will gain international attention as VVCS is at the forefront of treatment research into traumatic stress.

The primary challenge for the future is to guide the transition from the research phase to sustainable practice.

For a copy of the slides from these presentations contact: research@dva.gov.au

Upcoming DVA Research Seminars

2pm, 17 March 2010

Deployed Health

Speakers from the Centre for Military and Veterans' Health

A temporal analysis of the Healthy soldier effect

Michael Waller

East Timor and Bougainville Health Studies: An Overview

Annabel McGuire

Deployment frequency and health in the Near North Area of Influence studies

Michael Waller

DVA RESEARCH SEMINARS ARE AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE LATEST FINDINGS ON VETERANS' HEALTH AND WELLBEING FROM THE RESEARCHERS THEMSELVES

Seminars are held in the DVA Canberra office and via teleconference at DVA state offices.

To attend, please RSVP to: (02) 6289 6529 or research@dva.gov.au

Evidence-based practice in the management of osteoporosis in female veterans and war widows

Osteoporosis affects one in two women and one in three men over 60 and costs the Australian health system over seven billion dollars annually. To help improve treatment of osteoporosis, DVA's Applied Research Program co-funded a fellowship with the National Institute of Clinical Studies (NICS) and NHMRC.

The fellowship was undertaken by Clinical Associate Professor Charles Inderjeeth, geriatrician and rheumatologist. It started in 2007 and the final report was received by DVA in 2009.

The implementation research project focused on applying evidence to improve awareness, investigation and management of osteoporosis, specifically in patients presenting at hospital with a fracture.

Methodology

Baseline data was collected by surveying older patients presenting with a fracture in the emergency department of a large, tertiary, public teaching hospital and also surveying GPs and hospital clinicians who were likely to be reviewing patients following a fragility fracture.

Intervention included developing and providing single-page information materials for patients and doctors to help increase their awareness of osteoporosis and best practice for its management.

This was complemented by providing patients with better access to a hospital-based geriatric osteoporosis "fragile bone clinic" (or inpatient alternative). All patients referred to the fragile bone clinic were contacted by a Fracture Liaison Nurse/Officer to encourage them to have their osteoporosis risk reviewed.

Key Findings

Findings from the study included:

- Osteoporosis risk awareness among patients presenting to hospital with a fracture is low.
- Only a minority of patients is on optimal treatment.

- Information sheets informing patients of their risk and encouraging them to see their GP or a clinic for assessment may be useful, albeit limited.
- Provision of simple to use and widely accepted osteoporosis guidelines may be a useful tool to assist GPs and clinicians.
- A Fracture Liaison Nurse/Officer appears to be useful in the follow-up of patients with osteoporosis.
- Establishment of geriatric fragile bone clinics or equivalent for patient referral appears especially helpful.

Further information about this fellowship project and its results, or the Applied Research Program, can be obtained from DVA.

Contact: research@dva.gov.au

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The SRD Section is responsible for developing a strategic direction for DVA's applied and health research agenda. It works to ensure research is relevant to the department's policy, programs and service delivery. SRD activities include policy development, administering the ARP, and managing or supporting business areas to manage ARP-funded studies.

Research Resources

Recently released reports from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)

Ovarian Cancer in Australia: An Overview 2010

AIHW catalogue: CAN 48
<www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/11158>

Public Rental Housing 2008-09

AIHW catalogue: HOU 218
<www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/11420>

Serious Injury due to Land Transport Accidents, Australia 2006-07

AIHW catalogue: INJCAT 129
<www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/11033>

Other Recent Releases

Report of the Review of Health Technology Assessment in Australia

<www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/hta-review-report>

The Myer Foundation 2020: A Vision for Aged Care in Australia, Outcomes Review

<www.myerfoundation.org.au/uploads/rsfil/00143.pdf>

The Brotherhood's Social Barometer: Living the Second Fifty Years

<www.bsl.org.au/pdfs/KimberleySimon_Social_Barometer_living_the_second_fifty_years_2009.pdf>

Upcoming Conferences

ACOSS National Conference 2010: A vote for equity

25-26 March, Canberra
<www.acoss.org.au/events/view/449/>

Trauma: Resilience and Recovery, Conference of the Australian Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ASTSS)

2-4 September, Brisbane
<www.astss.org.au>

Rehabilitation 2010: Mind and Body

6-8 October, Melbourne
<www.dcconferences.com.au/rehab2010>

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the process for publishing or presenting results from ARP research?

DVA encourages researchers to publish findings of DVA-funded research in quality peer-reviewed journals and conference papers.

Before the researcher submits an article or paper, DVA needs to review it as part of meeting the Department's governance needs (e.g. compliance with Commonwealth Intellectual Property and

copyright requirements). This is reflected in Clause 18 of the Research Agreement template.

DVA review for a publication or presentation must come from the National Manager sponsoring the project and another National Manager with expertise in the subject. They consider issues of accurate content, presentation, clarity and relevance for DVA. This step also allows DVA to identify when a briefing for the Minister

might be required prior to the publication or presentation.

The process is facilitated by the SRD Section (contact details above) and a response is given within 28 days of receiving the request for journal articles, less for conference presentations.

Once an article is accepted by a journal, the DVA Legal Services group negotiates Commonwealth licences with the publisher.