



VIETNAM VETERANS' FAMILY STUDY

Bulletin No 16 – December 2011 From the Chair of the Consultative Forum (CF)

Below is an update on the Vietnam Veterans' Family Study (VVFS) as at December 2011.

Article for Newsletters

An article for use in your newsletters, journals and any other publicity on the study is provided at **Attachment A**.

Also, included are some words in respect to the Timor-Leste Family Study (TLFS). I would ask that you publicise the TLFS as well as the VVFS and I rely on your judgement in respect to the appropriateness of distribution of the TLFS information to each of your respective contacts.

Research Components Update

Tier 1(c): The report can be located via the main DVA web site at www.dva.gov.au/vvfs.

Tiers 1(a), (d) and (e) (Qualitative components): The reports for these components of the study are being prepared for publication and will be progressed to the Minister via the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission prior to a public release.

Tiers 2-4 (Questionnaires): Following a thorough development process including cognitive testing, piloting and review by the CF, SAC, Colmar Brunton Social Research, the Family Study Program (FSP) Team and the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC), the final questionnaires were agreed in July 2011. These questionnaires were endorsed by the CF, SAC and DVA HREC respectively.

The questionnaires were distributed by post and email to approximately 27,500 people who had registered to participate in the study between Tuesday 23 August 2011 and Friday 25 November 2011.

Following the initial distribution of questionnaires over 400 new registrations were taken. Registrations to participate in the study officially closed on Monday 7 November 2011 although a small number were taken by telephone following this date.

Over 17,000 questionnaires were completed and returned by the official closing date of Tuesday 1 December 2011.

Tier 5 (Mortality Study): The current match rate is over 80%. Combined with data currently being sourced from the State and Territory based Registries of Births, Deaths and Marriages, this will provide sufficient data to undertake a valid analysis.

The analysis of the data will be undertaken by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and a draft report is expected to be presented to the Department in the first quarter of 2012.

Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC)

The SAC meets regularly and has been involved with reviewing and commenting on proposed report structures and the progress of the Mortality Study component. It continues to monitor participation and questionnaire completion rates.

Vietnam Veterans' Family Study Communications

A letter will be sent to all registered VVFS participants during December 2011 updating them on the progress of the study.

A presentation on the Family Study Program was given to the Bombala Sub-Branch of the RSL on Thursday 27 October 2011 as part of DVA's Health Week activities.

Topics for Future Bulletins

I would welcome any suggestions on specific areas or topics regarding the VVFS that you would like included in future Bulletins. I will pass your suggestions to the FSP Team. The Team will then work on providing responses in upcoming Bulletins.

Family Study Program Team

The FSP Team's contact numbers are:

Director	Kyleigh Heggie	(02) 6289 6341
Assistant Director	Bill Bowe	(02) 6289 1127

You can also contact the FSP Team by calling 1800 502 302 (Free call) or by emailing health.study@dva.gov.au.

Peta Stevenson, National Manager, Research, Grants and Consultation Co-ordination Group, still has responsibility for the Family Study Program. Peta can be contacted on (02) 6289 4772 or 0411 154 787.

Next Consultative Forum Meeting

The timing of the next CF meeting is dependent on progress towards publication of the qualitative VVFS components and the receipt of indicative information regarding quantitative study results.

The plan is that the CF will meet jointly with the SAC in the first quarter of 2012. The FSP Team will liaise with you regarding a firm meeting date as soon as practicable.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for your work on the study over the course of 2011 and to wish you and those dear to you a safe and joyous Christmas!

Best wishes



Mark Kelly AO DSC
Major General
Repatriation Commissioner
Consultative Forum Chair Vietnam Veterans' Family Study

1 December 2011



VIETNAM VETERANS' FAMILY STUDY

UPDATE ON FAMILY STUDIES - DECEMBER 2011

Two important studies are looking at how operational service impacts on families

Significant progress has been made on a study investigating the long term effects of war service on the families of Vietnam veterans. The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) is hoping the research will provide the Government with a better understanding of what those impacts are, and how best to help those in need.

The questionnaires which was rigorously developed were sent to over 27,500 people who had previously registered their interest. It drew a fantastic response and over 17,000 questionnaires were completed and returned. An independent research organisation is now analysing the responses and the results will contribute to a final report expected to be presented to Government in late 2012.

To really understand the service effects on families, the questionnaires had to ask some very sensitive but necessary questions. Although some people may have been troubled by the personal nature of the questions, the study findings are expected to be invaluable in identifying how best to support families of Vietnam veterans and other past, present and future service personnel.

Meanwhile DVA has other important research underway.

The Timor-Leste study aims to determine the possible physical, mental or social health impacts on military families whose relatives served in Timor-Leste.

The Centre for Military and Veterans' Health, is conducting this study as part of the DVA's Family Study Program. It aims to identify the risks and factors that influence how Defence families cope with deployments. Those taking part include families of people who deployed to Timor-Leste or who were eligible but did not deploy. Questionnaires went out in May 2011 and a report on the findings is expected by mid 2012.

Privacy is paramount in both studies and everything received is being treated with respect and in confidence. The Department thanks everyone who has shared their experiences and plans to provide further updates at key points in 2012.

Call 1800 708 335 or email families@cmvh.org.au for more on the Timor-Leste study

If you or anyone you know has been distressed by either study call the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service on 1800 011 046 or another support service.