

## Inside this edition

There are a number of themes that run through this edition.

Firstly, a paper outlining recent deployments undertaken by the Australian Defence Force to help with humanitarian assistance following the Earthquake on the Indonesian Island of Nias which sadly, during this later deployment, a helicopter crashed and nine of our people paid the ultimate sacrifice.

In another paper, colleagues from the Centre for Military and Veterans' Health outline how they are proposing to undertake surveillance of the health of those deployed on overseas deployments, using the example of East Timor. We can expect a great deal of important material from this group in the future. As Susan Treloar notes in a commentary on this work, the stakeholders involved in this program are extremely optimistic as to what will be achieved.

Neil Westphalen provides us with a comprehensive biography of one of Australia's leading naval surgeons, the late Surgeon Rear Admiral Lockwood. There are two features that you may wish to note. First, this brilliant naval surgeon suffered from mental illness – before most of his stellar career. Clearly, people with such diseases can be successfully rehabilitated, and go on to make important contributions to the

Australian Defence Force. The other feature of the biography is the descriptions of blast injury provided by the late Admiral.

After reading Admiral Lockwood's description of blast injury, you will find Ben Mackie's important paper reviewing the world literature on lung assist devices in blast lung injury even more interesting. Sadly, we live in a world where military and civilian intensive care units will need to use this knowledge.

The legislative and administrative basis for successful rehabilitation of injured defence personnel is outlined in a paper by Jim Porteous. As outlined in the paper, there is a new focus on early identification of injury or illness.

Blast injury of another kind is identified in the paper that we have reprinted from *The Lancet* of 1915, in which Myers first described shell shock, with an attached commentary.

And this buffet of delights on military and veterans' health is rounded off by a toxicological essay on hemlock poisoning by Andy Robertson. As you can see from the article, the plant that gives rise to hemlock is common in Australia, and fatalities have occurred. Yet another concern for military health with units deployed in the field.

## President's message

As you read this, you will probably be sitting at the 2007 Australian Military Medicine Association Annual Scientific Conference in Melbourne.

Over the last 12 months, and in the follow-on from the highly successful joint Defence Health Services/AMMA Conference in Brisbane last year, the Association through its Council has been working to improve the way we plan and manage our conferences.

As with the 2002 joint conference, the 2006 event has given us the opportunity to build on a huge level of interest in the Association and its professional and scientific activities.

This has been aptly demonstrated through the requirement at relatively short notice to change the venue of this year's conference to one that is significantly larger and better equipped for a conference of the scope that we are now able to produce.

There was an amazing level of interest in presenting papers this year, and the significant sponsorship that we have been able to attract demanded the change.

It is clear that the hard work of the Conference Organisers, Nader Abou-Seif, Peter Habersberger, Helen Kelsall and Bob Stacy, ably supported by our Secretariat, Leishman Associates, has well and truly paid off. On your behalf, I congratulate them on their success.

Nevertheless, there are some key areas of improvement that Council is determined to work on to ensure that future conferences are even better.

Foremost amongst these is the need for significant forward planning, and in this respect it has become clear that our conferences must be planned at least two years in advance.

I am pleased to report that the DHS has agreed to come on board for the 2009 Conference, and this is likely to be held in Brisbane. The determination of this location is largely brought about by the need for a large venue and one which facilitates the movement of DHS personnel to and from the Conference.

DHS has also agreed to work around a three-year rotation for joint conferences, which is an approach that Council considers best meets the needs of the Association. More frequently would dilute the Association's ability to grow as an independent body, whilst less frequently would risk the events becoming less embedded as a part of the overall military health and medical professional program.

Council has also decided that the 2008 Conference will be held in Hobart. Venues for future Conferences will be determined as a minimum two years out from the date.

In closing, I wish to personally acknowledge and thank the Head Defence Health Services, Air Vice Marshal Tony Austin RAAF, for his support and commitment to the Association and its activities, in particular both our Conferences and our new Journal. His determination to support the Association as an independent professional and scientific body is gratefully appreciated.

Russ Schedlich  
President, AMMA

## Editor's message

Welcome to the first edition of the *Journal of Military and Veterans' Health*.

*JMVH* is the successor to *Australian Military Medicine*, the original journal of the Australian Military Medicine Association.

*AMM* started as a fairly basic newsletter at the time of the Association's formation in 1991. Over the succeeding years, and under the tutelage of a number of editors, it had developed to the point of being a professionally prepared publication, with a variety of content. Publication largely depended upon the work of a sole editor, and its ability to grow and develop was thereby limited.

In 2005, representatives of the Association, the Defence Health Services and the Centre for Military and Veterans' Health met to discuss the future of professional and scientific publication in the area of military medicine and veterans' health. At this meeting, it was agreed that the Association should work, in conjunction with these organisations and others that have an interest in and commitment to research and publication in these fields, to develop its Journal into one of national and international standing.

To this end, the Association established an Editorial Board, consisting of representatives from the Association, the DHS, CMVH, and universities that are significantly involved in military and veterans' health research. Recently, the addition of a New Zealand Defence Force Health Services member was considered appropriate, and Brigadier Anne Campbell, the Director-General of the NZDFHS, kindly agreed.

Over the last nine months, the Board has been working with great dedication to develop and publish the Journal that you now hold in your hands.

Additionally, the Association through its Council has committed significant funds for the set up of the Journal and its associated website. I am also pleased to report that, through Senator Bruce Billson, the Minister for Veterans Affairs, the Commonwealth Government has provided a one-off grant of \$5,000 to assist with these costs.

The Editorial Board has worked hard in identifying the framework within which the Journal should be published, including categories for papers, instructions for authors, reviewing processes, layouts and website design.

There remains a considerable body of work to be completed, including populating the website, bedding down electronic-based processes for managing the receipt, review and publication of papers, and setting out a variety of policies in relation to both these matters and other key issues such as editorial independence. The Board is also in the process of inviting a variety of appropriately experienced international researchers and authors to constitute an International Advisory Board.

The biggest challenge will be in the gathering together of appropriate high-quality work suitable for publication. I expect that this will be a bit of a grind in the initial stages, but the Association and the Board are determined to work as hard as possible to ensure that over the next couple of years *JMVH* becomes recognised as a national if not world leader in military medicine and veterans' health scientific publication, to the point where it will self-attract suitable copy.

Recognising that *JMVH* is the successor of our former Journal, the volume and issue number sequence has been continued from the last edition of *Australian Military Medicine*.

*JMVH* will be published four times a year. Initially this will be three issues of new copy, and one issue of conference abstracts. In the very near future, it is our determination that there will be four issues per year of new copy. The conference abstracts will then become a supplement to one of these issues.

In the very near future, you may anticipate being approached by one of the members of the Editorial Board asking you to consider putting pen to paper to contribute to this new Journal.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the involvement and commitment of the members of the Editorial Board, whose names are listed at the front of this Journal. They have provided a wealth of experience and ideas that have laid the foundation for a Journal that I am sure in the not too distant future will be recognised around the world as one of the leaders in its field.

I trust you enjoy this first edition.

Russ Schedlich  
Editor-in-Chief