

## AMMA JOURNAL VOL 11 ISSUE 2

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### **Editorial – Rumours of war ...**

by  
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AS WE APPROACH the first anniversary of the terrorist attacks of 11 September, the Australian Defence Force remains actively involved in Afghanistan, the Persian Gulf and central Asia, as well as East Timor, Bougainville and the Solomon Islands, and in the seas to our north. For all three Services, this continues to be one of the largest Defence Health Service undertakings since the Vietnam War. The other factor that has influenced the way we view our security is the anthrax letter attacks in late 2001 in the United States. These attacks have demonstrated the vulnerability of Western countries to such attacks. In this issue, both the effects of the 'white powder' incidents on the Australian public health system and the further developments of the health response to chemical, biological or radiological attack are considered. The third paper with this theme reviews developments of pretreatment agents' protective against mustard poisoning.

As we move into September 2002, there are also rumours of war. The United States is keen that the long-term concerns about Iraq's potential weapons of mass destruction be addressed. Whether this will involve the return of weapons inspectors, limited conflict or all-out war is difficult to predict. What is even more difficult to predict is what the ADF's health involvement will be. My December editorial should be an interesting one as we look back over the next few months.

The Defence Health Symposium 2002, AMMA's conjoint meeting with the Defence Health Service, the Australian Disaster Medicine Group and the Australian Centre for Post-traumatic Mental Health, was a roaring success. With over 620 attendees, there was a myriad of excellent papers presented, ample opportunity to catch up and network, and a good infusion of over 50 new members into AMMA. I am also very happy to see a range of papers coming to Australian Military Medicine for publication.

In addition to the papers mentioned earlier, this issue addresses a number of key military medical themes, including medical research, health policy, occupational health and Naval history. The future of Defence medical research, the nutrition of our recruits, new Japanese Encephalitis vaccines and chemical protective agents, are all addressed. Critical analysis of current Defence health policy considers cervical cancer screening, influenza vaccine and surgical smoke. Finally, the challenge of providing Naval health care during the Tudor period provides some important lessons for today.

As always, an excellent series of papers, which are available to universities and other subscribers, including Defence, through the Australasian Medical Index and Meditext. Australian Military Medicine is also working towards being fully peer-reviewed by 2003. In this issue, we see a number of articles that have been peer-reviewed. If you can assist in this process, please complete the enclosed form and return to the Editor. The other initiative is to look back ten years to the beginning of the journal and to reprint some of the articles from that time. The first of these is James Ross' article on influenza vaccination from 1992.

If possible, the next six months promises to be more challenging than the last. The rumours of war will continue and may crystallise, and uniformed shortages will continue to challenge. At the very least, there should continue to be a myriad of topics for future papers, reviews, editorials and letters to the Editor.