

AMMA JOURNAL VOL 13 ISSUE 2

OCTOBER 2004

EDITORIAL A Special Edition...

by
Andy Robertson

OVER THE LAST 12 YEARS, Australian Military Medicine has published a myriad of articles on all aspects of military medicine. One aspect that has been close to my heart, particularly over the last 10 years, has been the health effects of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) weapons. The world has changed in this period as well. Over the twelve years, these agents have gone from primarily a military concern, and how we protect and treat our troops, to a civilian concern, and how do we protect a civilian population from the use of such weapons by terrorists. Unfortunately, we have seen two sarin attacks be Aum Shinriyko in Japan (1994 and 1995) and the anthrax mail attacks in the United States, still unsolved, in 2001. We also saw our Defence Force move into more peacekeeping and support roles. Many were subsequently involved in CBRN weapons inspections in Iraq during the 1990s (as highlighted by the attached picture of Army, Navy and Air Force Doctors in Baghdad in 1997), preparations for the 2000 Sydney Olympics and subsequent operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, both of which had some CBRN overtones.



Our members have changed, with many joining in recent years, who would be unaware of some of the excellent articles previously published in Australian Military Medicine. To that end, this issue collects some 24 articles published over the last 12 years, which look at all aspects of CBRN medical defence. The issue collects up all of Sue Sharpe's excellent series on biological weapons, a range of articles on chemical and biological issues from the Defence Science and Technology Organisation, some more recent articles on the civilian response, and even the odd article from me. This issue is, I envisage, the first of a series of issues over the next few years, which will capture the excellent articles published over the last few years into very useful compellations for future reference. The medical effects of conventional weapons, military-medical history and the psychological effects of conflict are all potential areas for future issues.

This issue will also be my last as Editor. As journal Editor since 1999 and Assistant Editor for four years prior to that, the time has come for me to hand over the reins to somebody else. I have been very pleased with the growth of the journal, the move to a peer-review process and the continued excellent articles. I would encourage any potential authors to support the new Editor and continue to get papers in as early as possible to allow peer review. As always, I am grateful to all the authors and the reviewers, who have volunteered and graciously reviewed various articles so far.