

## AMMA JOURNAL VOL 12 ISSUE 2

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### Abstract from the Literature

by  
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Caldicott DG, Edwards NA. The tools of the trade: weapons of mass destruction. *Emerg Med (Fremantle)* 2002 Sep 14 (3):240-8.

Caldicott DG, Edwards NA, Tingey D, Bonnin R. Medical response to a terrorist attack and weapons of mass destruction. *Emerg Med (Fremantle)* 2002 Sep 14 (3):230-9.

Caldicott DG, Edwards NA. The global threat of terrorism and its impact on Australia. *Emerg Med (Fremantle)* 2002 Sep 14 (3):218-29.

#### COMMENT

*Caldicott and Edwards have written a series of articles in Emergency Medicine (Fremantle), which look at the global threat of terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and their potential impact. While there is nothing particularly new in these articles, they do provide an excellent summary of the issues with an Australian focus. Edwards completed the ADF MO NBC Course in 2001, and with Caldicott, has established the only hospital-based research centre in Australia in this area.*

Copeland P, Roberts H, Burke B. Reinstatement orders - Recent developments. *The Quarterly (RACMA)* 2003; 36(1): 12.

The Full Court of the Federal Court recently held that an order reinstating an employee to his or her former position does not necessarily mean the employer is required to provide the employee with his or her former duties, or any duties at all: Ramsey Butchering Services Pty Ltd v Blackadder [2003]. FCAFC20 (21Feb03)

#### COMMENT

*Yet another reason to be careful when writing contracts. Employers of contractors, including Defence, should be careful when drafting contracts to ensure that the contracts do not provide employees with a right to work.*

Enstone JE, Wale MCJ, Nguyen-Van-Tam JS, Pearson JCG. Adverse medical events in British service personnel following anthrax vaccination. *Vaccine* 2003, 21:1348 - 54.

The safety of the UK anthrax vaccine in British service personnel was evaluated by a retrospective cohort study of randomly selected personnel from five Royal Air Force bases by investigating adverse medical events and consultation rates for a period before and after vaccination. Vaccination acceptance rate varied from 27 to 89% (P=0.0001). In the vaccinated cohort 11.1% (n=368) reported side-effects. The number of consultations in the year prior to vaccination (P=0.04) and RAF base (P=0.0085) were associated with side-effects. Only the RAF base remained a statistically significant factor (P=0.007) after adjusting for other factors. The anthrax vaccine resulted in mild side-effects in 11%, and no serious side-effects were observed. Acceptors of vaccine did not have significantly more medical consultations following vaccination than their unvaccinated counterparts.

#### COMMENT

*This is one of few studies which look at the UK military anthrax vaccination experience. This study highlights two main themes. One, the UK anthrax vaccine is safe to give, with an 11% rate of mild side effects and no major side-effects. Two, the unit approach to the vaccination program is linked to the number of side-effects. If the participants are convinced of the utility and safety of the vaccine, the take-up rate and reported side-effects are significantly lower (in some cases, 80% lower).<sup>1</sup> Hearts and minds are they aspect of any successful vaccination program.*

**Robertson AG. Vaccine development: the biological weapon imperative. *Dev Biol (Basel)* 2002; 110:91-7**

The biological warfare capabilities of state and non- state actors continue to grow worldwide, both in sophistication and breadth. More than a dozen nations, including Iraq, Iran, Libya, Syria and North Korea, are either actively pursuing or possess biological weapons for use against their enemies. There is also a heightened awareness of the use of such agents by terrorist groups, a possibly deleterious side-effect of an increased awareness by the general public. This paper looks at the growing threat of the use of biological agents by both national programmes and non-state actors, the possible agents which might be considered for use, and the potential role that vaccine development may have in protecting both military and civilian populations against biological weapons attacks in the future.

**COMMENT**

*This has been recently published and is based on a presentation on Aug 01 by the reviewer.*