

ADF Health

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Personal costs of service

The tragic loss of five members of the Defence Health Service in a helicopter crash on the Indonesian island of Nias on 2 April 2005 caused sadness for us all. It is a stark reminder that our Australian Defence Force service, even in peacetime, can extract a heavy personal cost. In this issue (*page 90*) we remember those five souls and celebrate their lives of service to others.

The massive relief effort by ADF members following the Boxing Day tsunami has yet to be told fully. However, Byleveld and colleagues (*page 48*) describe the public health aspects of that disaster. We contrast that with the ADF response to the Aitape tsunami on the northern coast of Papua New Guinea in July 1998 (*page 56*).

One of the personal costs, which we all face, is psychological trauma as a result of witnessing death and disaster. Articles by Milton (*page 85*) and Rayner (*page 81*) explore the detection of post-traumatic stress disorder in the ADF and canvass the optimal means of treating it.

This issue introduces a new series, "From the Warrant Officer's desk" (*page 60*), chronicling the work, triumphs and difficulties of enlisted health personnel. It may interest you to realise that DHS consists of 2350 full time uniformed members, 3300 active and standby Reservists, 1200 civilian Contract Health Practitioners and 450 Australian Public Service members. I would hope that each of these could feel "ownership" of the Journal.

Continuing the theme of personal costs, we examine the benefits available to families of ADF members who die or are permanently incapacitated during duty (*page 67*). Everyone should consider their financial position and make appropriate arrangements before deploying. Insurance cover that does not exempt warlike conditions or civil disturbance is available to ADF members.

We also highlight the tragedy of child soldiers in Africa (*page 72*). It is a story of primeval brutality, which many of our readers will remember from Rwanda.

We congratulate those members of the DHS who have recently been honoured, including Air Vice Marshall Bruce Short AM, Colonel Stephan Rudzki AM, and Captain Ian Jones AM. Congratulations are also extended to senior officers on their recent promotions, including Air Vice Marshall Tony Austin, Head, DHS; Rear Admiral Graeme Shirtley, Surgeon General ADF, Brigadier Tony Gill, Commodore Robyn Walker and Commodore Michael Garvan. In addition, we congratulate Squadron Leader Glenn Pascoe, who topped the recent aviation medicine exams in Farnborough, UK.

I would like to pay tribute to all those who have written articles or who have provided expert peer review. Finally, may I acknowledge our growing band of commercial supporters.

Commander Mike O'Connor MD, FRANZCOG, RANR

Editor, *ADF Health*



Thanks to the readers ...

...who answered the readership survey published in the previous issue of *ADF Health*. Most of the responses received were strongly positive, with praise for the presentation and content of the Journal. The information provided about preferred topics for articles was very useful — many readers asked for more “practice tips” and “how to” articles, and we intend to answer the call, starting with “Intra-oral suture removal” in this issue.

The results of the readership survey are available online for interested readers.¹

I would like to thank Captain Michael Tyquin for undertaking a telephone survey to supplement the responses sent in by fax and post, and Craig Bingham from the Australasian Medical Publishing Company for collecting and reporting the survey results.

All the survey respondents went into the draw for a Canon PowerShot Pro 1 digital camera, a prize kindly donated by Stryker Instruments. Congratulations to our prizewinner Captain Theresa Kot (inactive Reserve), whose name was drawn by Ms Charlie Trinder, Director of Stryker Medsurg.

Commander Mike O'Connor

Editor, *ADF Health*

1. http://www.defence.gov.au/dpe/dhs/infocentre/publications/journals/NoIDs/adfhealth_oct05/surveyresults.doc [Word document].



Thanks to the reviewers

ADF Health thanks the peer reviewers who contributed comments on the articles submitted for this issue:

Tony Austin, Dan Black, Jeff Brock, Mick Campion, Christopher Fairley, Mike Flynn, Bruce Grieg, David Lamond, Peter Leggat, Sandy MacFarlane, Leeane Nightingale, John Pearn, Michael Robertson, Tracy Smart, Mike Tyquin, Duncan Wallace, Peter Wilkins.

