

AF study reveals apparent cancer, Agent Orange exposure association

A new analysis of cancer incidence among Air Force veterans of the Vietnam War found increased risks of prostate cancer and melanoma in those who sprayed Agent Orange and other herbicides, according to an article that will be published in the February edition of the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine.

The article, written by members of the Air Force Health Study on Operation Ranch Hand, indicates that a statistical adjustment for years served in Southeast Asia (SEA) reveals increased risks of prostate cancer, melanoma and cancer at any anatomical site among those with the highest dioxin exposure. Previous results of the Study's research had found no consistent evidence that Agent Orange is related to cancer.

The National Academy of Sciences will review this study along with many other studies on herbicide and dioxin exposure to make a report to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

The study included veterans of Operation Ranch Hand, the unit responsible for the aerial spraying of Agent Orange and other herbicides in Vietnam, and compared them to Air Force veterans who served in SEA during the war but did not spray herbicides.

The study included two parts: external contrasts with the national population and internal contrasts with adjustments for years served in the SEA region. In both parts, researchers defined cancer as specified by the Surveillance Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) section of the National Cancer Institute.

Contrasts with the national population revealed increased risks of melanoma in Ranch Hand veterans and an in-

creased risk of prostate cancer in Ranch Hand and comparison veterans. The significantly increased standardized incidence ratios ranged from 1.46 to 2.33. The elevated risks could be partly due to increased case finding as a result of extensive screening at the periodic Air Force Health Study physical examinations.

The study also found a significant decrease in cancer of the digestive system in the Ranch Hand group and a significant decrease in cancer of the urinary and lymphopoeitic systems in the comparison group. No significant increase in the risk of death from cancer was found in either the Ranch Hand or the comparison group when compared to national rates.

The second part of the study contrasted Ranch Hands in high, low and background dioxin exposure categories with Comparisons. Years in SEA confounded the analysis. Following standard statistical procedures, investigators stratified by this confounding variable. Among those who served no more than two years in SEA, Ranch Hand veterans with the highest dioxin levels were found to exhibit an increased risk of cancer at any anatomical site, prostate and melanoma.

The relative risk for "any site cancer" in the high dioxin category was 2.02 with a 95 percent confidence interval of 1.03 to 3.95. Increases in the risk of prostate cancer and melanoma were higher but based on small numbers, and the confidence intervals were wide. Of 65 "any site cancers" in the Ranch Hand group, 21 were of the prostate and 11 were melanoma.

Dioxin exposures of members of the Ranch Hand unit were probably greater than those experienced by the average Vietnam veteran.

For more information, contact the Air Force Surgeon General's Office at (202) 767-4797 or access the Ranch Hand Study web site at: <http://www.brooks.af.mil/AFRL/HED/hedb/afhs/afhs.shtml>.

SBP notes

Children are eligible for SBP payments as long as they are under age 18, or under age 22 if a full-time student in an accredited school.

A child who is disabled and incapable of self-support remains eligible for life or as long as disabled and unmarried if the disability occurred before age 18 (or before age 22 if a full-time student).

Marriage at any age terminates a child's SBP eligibility.

A child acquired after retirement may be covered under SBP if no eligible children existed at the time of retirement and requested within one year of acquiring the child.

A child acquired after retirement is automatically covered if child coverage was taken at retirement.

In elections of spouse and child coverage, as contingent beneficiaries, children receive SBP payments only in the event the spouse subsequently dies, or remarries before attaining age 55.

Important telephone numbers

The toll-free numbers below are staffed by experts who can help beneficiaries find out about certain medical information. These new telephone numbers greatly expand TRICARE's communications efforts.

Mail Order Pharmacy (866) 363-8667
 TRICARE- For-Life (888) DoD-LIFE (888-363-5433)

* Senior Pharmacy Program 1 (877) 363-6377
 * Retiree Dental Plan 1 (888) 838-8737

How to change your correspondence address

The Afterburner, News for USAF Retired Personnel, is mailed to Air Force retirees and Survivor Benefit Plan annuitants using correspondence addresses supplied by the Defense Finance and Accounting Service's Cleveland Center (DFAS-CL).

Addresses of non annuitant surviving spouses of Air Force retirees are maintained in a separate data base explained below.

Retirees – Those members in receipt of or entitled to retired pay, including retirees whose pay (part or all), comes from the VA or from Civil Service (because of combined federal service), should send their change of address to:

DFAS

U. S. Military Retirement Pay
P.O. Box 7130
London, KY 40742-7130
Phone: 1 (800)321-1080 or
FAX: 1(800)469-6559

Include your Social Security number and sign your request when mailing or FAXing.

It's important to send the change of address to the correct location to ensure the change is made in a timely manner. Please note that the London, KY address below is a contractor that films the written request as a computer image and transmits it to DFAS.

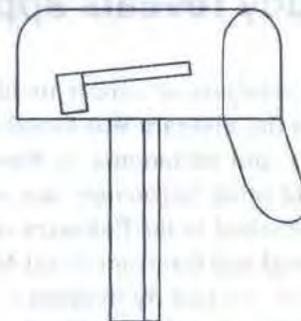
SBP/RSFPP annuitants –

Those surviving spouses who are in receipt of or entitled to a Survivor Benefit Plan/Retired Serviceman's Family Protection Plan annuity (this includes surviving spouses of retirees who were enrolled in SBP but who are receiving DIC in lieu of the SBP, must send a change of address to:

DFAS

U.S. Military Annuitant Pay
P.O. Box 7131
London, KY 40742-7131
Phone: 1(800)321-1080 or
FAX: 1(800)982-8459

If mailing or FAXing, include your Social Security number and that of the sponsor and sign your request.



Non-SBP/RSFPP annuitants

— Surviving spouses of retirees who were not enrolled in either the Survivor Benefit Plan/Retired Serviceman's Family Protection Plan (but who may or may not be receiving a DIC pension from the VA), and who are currently receiving the **Afterburner** in their own name, should mail the new address and include the sponsor's retired grade and SSN to:

HQ AFPC/DPPTTR

550 C Street West Ste 11
Randolph AFB TX 78150-4713

Surviving spouses in this category who are not receiving the **Afterburner** in their own name may request to be placed on the list by sending a letter of request to the same address.

DO NOT use this portion as a Change of Address form. See information above for the correct change of address procedures. Anything else will only delay matters.

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