Author's response to reviews

Title: Reproductive health of male Australian veterans of the 1991 Gulf War

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Version: 2 Date: 20 March 2007

Author's response to reviews: see over
19 March 2007

Dr Lolu da-Silva
Assistant Editor, BMC-series journals

Re: MS: 1285904190109457 Reproductive health of male Australian veterans of the 1991 Gulf War. Helen L Kelsall, Malcolm R Sim, Jillian F Ikin, Andrew B Forbes, Dean P McKenzie, Deborah C Glass, Peter Ittak

Dear Dr da-Silva

Thank you for your recent email and we appreciate the reviewer’s positive and constructive comments in relation to our manuscript. We are pleased to present a revised version and our responses to address the reviewer’s comments are as follows:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. We have removed the clause “…apart from a small increased risk of reported infertility in the period following the Gulf War.” from the last line of the Abstract.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. The reviewer has summarised this relevant limitation succinctly. We have now stated in the Discussion, 5th paragraph that relates to limitations of our study “Our study groups were categorised as exposed or unexposed on the basis of their deployment or not to the 1990-91 Gulf War. The lack of reliable exposure data on specific exposures in theatre and other occupational and behavioural characteristics that may adversely affect reproductive health is a further limitation of our study.” For readability we have made a minor wording change to the preceding sentence.

Discretionary Revisions

1. A small number of participants who had sought infertility treatment reported that a cause for their fertility difficulties had been found. We have made a minor revision to clarify expression of this in Results, Fertility difficulties, 3rd sentence to read “…Of those subjects in both groups who reported fertility difficulties in 1991 or later, approximately half had sought infertility treatment and, of these, more than half reported that a cause for their fertility difficulties had been found…” As the number of respondents who then specified a cause was small in total, and self-reported and could not be verified, we did not consider the data sufficiently reliable for us to report in the manuscript.

2. As the second sentence of the Abstract, Methods we include the timing of the study. “The study was conducted from August 2000 to April 2002.”

3. The footnote to Table 1 now includes “Odds ratios were obtained by logistic regression adjusting for age, rank, service type, education, marital status, smoking and alcohol.”

In addition, we now include the citation for reference 19 that was previously in press, and have made minor revisions to ensure conformity with the most recent manuscript formatting requirements.
We appreciate the reviewer’s thoughtful critique of the manuscript and trust that our revisions and responses satisfactorily address the points raised. Thank you for your consideration of our revised manuscript.

Yours sincerely

Dr Helen Kelsall