



**HQ Surgeon General**  
**6<sup>th</sup> Floor Zone E**  
**Ministry Of Defence**  
**Main Building, Whitehall**  
**LONDON SW1A 2HB**

Joanna Lane  
[joannalane@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:joannalane@blueyonder.co.uk)

Your Reference  
Our Reference 20-05-2011-114530-002  
Date 20 June 2011

Dear Ms Lane,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request of the 20<sup>th</sup> May, in which you asked for the following information:

1. **How many army personnel have received head injuries (including mild traumatic brain injury) during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars?**
2. **Are these people being screened for pituitary damage?**

I can confirm that the Ministry of Defence (MOD) holds information on the number of Service personnel who have sustained a head injury, including mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI), as a result of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. However, from our preliminary assessment, it is clear that we will not be able to answer your request without further clarification. Under section 1(3) of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), a public authority need not comply with a request unless any further information reasonably required to locate the information is supplied. If a request is too broad or general in nature, then public authorities have a duty to provide advice and assistance to the applicant in order to focus the request.

In order to provide you with the information on the scale that you have requested would require recalling the medical records for approximately 191,690 Service personnel who have deployed to Iraq and/or Afghanistan to identify whether they have had sustained a head injury, which would take more than a year to complete.

Section 12 of the Act makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit, which for central government is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3.5 working days in determining whether the department holds the information, locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

However we can access data from three sources which record Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) (mild, moderate or severe), these are:

- The Joint Theatre and Trauma Register (JTTR), this data covers the period from 1 January 2003 to 31 December 2010.
- Data held by the Neurology Rehabilitation Group (NRG) at the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC), Headley Court. This data covers the period from 1 July 2006 to 31 December 2010. The NRG delivers care for Service personnel with moderate and severe cases of TBI.

- Data from the mTBI database held by the mTBI cell at DMRC, this data covers the period from June 2008 to 31 December 2010.

Between 1 January 2003 and 31 December 2010 there have been 468 patients identified as having a TBI (mild, moderate or severe), 59 from injuries sustained on Op TELIC (Iraq) and 408 from injuries sustained on Op HERRICK (Afghanistan) (for one patient the Operation is not recorded).

It is important to note that it is possible that there are individuals who are experiencing symptoms associated with a mTBI who have not been referred to or screened by the mTBI team and therefore will not be included in these numbers.

In answer to your second question, we do not automatically screen for pituitary damage in every single individual who has suffered a head injury. The investigations undertaken in any particular case are determined by the nature of the patient's injury and their clinical condition, in accordance with existing guidelines. However, all traumatic brain injury patients who are admitted to the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC) at Headley Court are routinely screened for endocrine dysfunction. If the tests are abnormal, the patient is referred to an appropriate civilian clinical specialist in endocrinology. If the tests are normal, they are repeated after 12 months either by DMRC or the patient's Medical Officer.

#### **HQ Surgeon General Secretariat**

If you are not satisfied with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Head of Corporate Information, 6th Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail [CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk](mailto:CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk)). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, <http://www.ico.gov.uk>.