

Defence Policy Review

Toronto, Ontario

May 20, 2016

Globally, military forces are considered a population with specific life experiences that impact military personnel, Veteran, and their families' health and well-being. The unique physical, mental and social contexts of their service are significant and complex and distinguishes them from the general population. Providing them with the specific health care they need – and deserve – requires a centralized focus.

The Canadian Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs identify and understand the unique health care needs and priorities of our Military and Veterans and their families and undertake targeted research to address the priority areas through their own researchers, as well as through the Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health (CIMVHR).

Until CIMVHR was formed in 2010, Canada stood alone amongst major military allies in not having an academic institute dedicated to the health needs of military personnel, Veterans, and their families (MVF).

Since 2010, CIMVHR was burgeoned into a network of more than 1,000 researchers from 41 universities across Canada and seven international universities. It serves to facilitate the dissemination of evidence-informed research and best practices among stakeholders to strengthen institutions and mechanisms that can systematically promote interactions between researchers, policy-makers, and health workers who are positioned to influence the uptake of research findings.

CIMVHR's activities have resulted in a multitude of collaborations, projects, special interest research groups, knowledge translation strategies, educational opportunities and partnerships. All of this has served to inform policies, policy change, as well as treatments and programming, for our military personnel, Veterans and their families.

CIMVHR has worked to become the recognized and respected "hub" of Canadian Military and Veteran Health Research. As such, we confidently assert that the Defence Policy Review needs to acknowledge:

- That the military, Veterans and their families (MVF) population should be recognized by the Tri-council as a unique population in its own right;
- That Canadian military personnel, Veterans and their families need to be recognized within Provincial and Territorial health care systems as a unique population;
- That the health and well-being of this unique population is maximized through world-class research resulting in evidence-informed policies, practices and programs;

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- That there is common applicability of MVF research results (policies, programs, practice) to multiple special populations such as First Responders;
- That military health care advances made in extreme situations, such as Afghanistan, can be translated readily to benefit the wider Canadian population.

CIMVHR has earned credibility as a conduit for the transfer of MVF research knowledge, and is poised to make great strides in further research advances if adequately supported.

Providing on-going funding to CIMVHR will safeguard the viability of the research network to foster and strengthen national and international collaborative research relationships that will advance the identification and uptake of knowledge on MVF health through the life course. Sustainability will ensure that the network is able to communicate and synthesize the most current evidence into relevant and timely policies, practices and programs. Secure funding will guarantee the development of a data-sharing infrastructure model that facilitates effective KT of research results and gaps related to MVF health.

To optimize the health and well-being of Canadian military personnel, veterans and their families, Canada must continue to harness and mobilize the national capacity for high-impact research, knowledge creation and knowledge exchange.

Stéphanie Bélanger, PhD

Associate Scientific Director | Directrice scientifique associée

Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research
L'Institut canadien de recherche sur la santé des militaires et des vétérans
Tel: 613-541-6000 ext | poste 3678

www.cimvhr.ca | www.cimvhr.ca/fr/

Associate Professor | Professeure agrégée
Royal Military College of Canada | Collège militaire royal du Canada
PO Box 17000 Stn Forces | CP 17000 Succ Forces, Kingston, ON, K7K 7B4