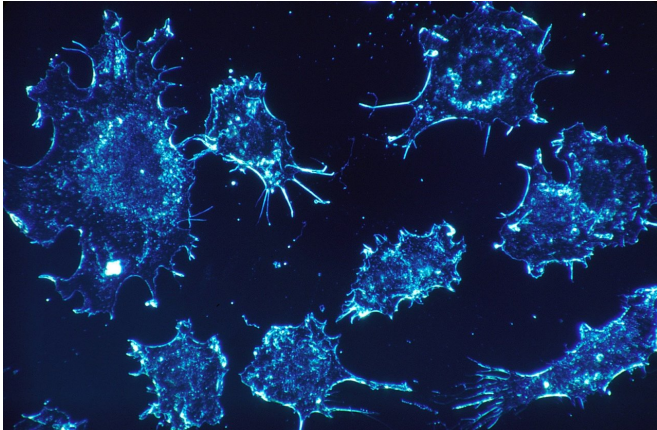


# New study examines prevalence of asbestos-related cancer in the military

16 September 2020



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New research conducted by the University of Sheffield into the incidence and experience of mesothelioma among UK armed forces has identified how care and support can be improved.

Funded by national cancer charity, Mesothelioma UK, the Military Experiences of Mesothelioma Study (MiMES) aims to explore the prevalence of the asbestos-related cancer—[mesothelioma](#)—among British [armed forces](#) veterans, to understand their experience and health/support needs, and to identify how health and legal professionals, and support agencies can best meet the needs of this group.

Mesothelioma is a form of cancer that affects the mesothelium. The mesothelium is a thin membrane that lines the inner surface of the chest wall (the pleura), the abdomen (the peritoneum) and the testicles. Exposure to asbestos is responsible for nine out of ten mesothelioma cases. Mesothelioma is a terminal disease, with 50 percent of those diagnosed dying within 12 months.

2,700 new cases of mesothelioma are diagnosed

in the UK each year and while the incidence among UK [military veterans](#) remains unknown, eight veterans per month claim war pensions due to a diagnosis of mesothelioma.

Quantitative data was gathered to generate statistics and interviews were carried out with veterans living with mesothelioma to identify common experiences and needs.

Angela Tod, Professor of Older People and Care at the University of Sheffield's Health Sciences School, said: "Research like this is vital if we are to provide all those living with mesothelioma with equitable access to first class care and treatment.

"We're grateful to everyone who took part and are pleased that the findings will be used as an educational resource for professionals working with veterans with mesothelioma."

The report identified the following key messages for healthcare and legal professionals, and other support agencies:

- Assumptions regarding who has been exposed to asbestos while in the armed forces should be challenged and awareness of the risk of exposure should be raised
- Occupational history taking requires skill and sensitivity for patients with an armed forces background
- Veterans' stoic approach may disguise their physical and emotional needs
- Veterans require access to experts with experience of navigating the relevant health, legal and military systems
- It is important to recognize and understand the perspective and support needs of family members
- Veterans living with mesothelioma may prefer to support, and be supported by, other veterans
- Some veterans see inequalities between

their experience of living with mesothelioma and that of civilians

- There is a lack of awareness regarding asbestos exposure in the armed forces and concern about ongoing asbestos risk

Head of Services for Mesothelioma UK, Liz Darlison, commented: "This study was part of Mesothelioma UK's Supporting Our Armed Forces project. Armed forces personnel often have very different experiences and needs to civilians and it is important that the health and legal professionals supporting them are aware of this, so that they can provide the most effective help possible. We were delighted to support this research and are confident that the findings will lead to an improvement in support for this group of patients."

**More information:** The full report is available online: [www.mesothelioma.uk.com/about- ...helioma-study-mimes/](http://www.mesothelioma.uk.com/about-...helioma-study-mimes/)

Provided by University of Sheffield

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