

5 Future directions

In the light of the findings in this report, there are a number of areas that may warrant further investigation:

- Examination of the relationship between individual unit, group or ship exposures and cancer outcomes.

- Examination of the relationship between year of service in Korea and cancer risk:

The changing pattern of the war meant that the Army troops who were engaged early in the war tended to be mobile, whereas those engaged later were more likely to be relatively static in trench-based warfare. These different experiences may have different cancer-related exposures and an analysis of the year of service may elucidate this issue.

- Examination of the cumulative effects of multiple conflict exposures (e.g. World War II – Korea – Vietnam):

As a result of the timing of the Korean conflict, many servicemen would have been involved in World War II prior to the Korean conflict. Some of the Korean War veterans would have then continued their service onto the Vietnam conflict as well. It would be of some interest to understand if these servicemen who served in other conflicts had a cancer risk that was any different from their peers who did not serve in other conflicts.

- Examination of other environmental and personal risk factors and their impact on cancer risk:

The risk factors for cancer are many and varied. The identification of cancers related to smoking in this study seems to account only for a proportion of the excess risk. An examination of the available evidence for other risk factors (environmental and personal) may explain the risk associated with other cancers.

- Examination of the histological pattern of cancers to identify any differences that may have occurred as a result of Korean conflict exposures:

While this report has examined cancer site specific patterns, little work has been done to understand whether cancers within veterans have different histological patterns, and if they do why this might be. A study extending the work here would have the potential to answer this question.

- An examination and integration of results from the Korean War Veterans Health Survey and those from this study.

The Korean War Veterans Health Survey has the potential to identify a range of risk factors for cancer that may be recombined with the results from this study. This may allow for some understanding of the post-conflict risk factors and their relationship to cancer risk. One of these factors might be the prevalence rate of smoking in veterans over time.