

## DEPARTMENTS OF DEFENCE AND VETERANS' AFFAIRS HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS

Thank you for taking part in this research. This pamphlet explains your rights as a participant.

### **What is the Departments of Defence and Veterans' Affairs Human Research Ethics Committee?**

- The Departments of Defence and Veterans' Affairs Human Research Ethics Committee (DDVA HREC) was established on 1 July 2017 and is responsible for ensuring that Defence and the Department of Veterans Affairs comply with accepted guidelines for research involving human beings. Prior to this date, both the Department of Defence and the Department of Veterans' Affairs had their own human research ethics committees.
- After World War II (WWII), there was concern around the world about human experimentation. The Declaration of Helsinki, which was first adopted in 1964, provides a set of principles to be followed wherever humans are used in medical research projects.
- The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) in Australia has published the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (National Statement). These guidelines outline the standards for the conduct of human research.
- The DDVA HREC follows the principles of the *Declaration of Helsinki*, the National Statement and other relevant human research guidelines.

### **What Departments of Defence and Veterans' Affairs Human Research Ethics Committee approval means**

- If the project has DDVA HREC approval, it means that DDVA HREC has reviewed the research proposal and has agreed that the research is ethically acceptable.
- DDVA HREC approval does not guarantee access to funding, information or assistance from Defence or the Department of Veterans' Affairs.
- DDVA HREC approval does not imply any obligation on commanders to order or encourage their Service personnel to participate or to release personnel from their usual workplace to participate. Within Defence, participation in research of any particular personnel must have clearance from their commanders/managers; however, commanders/managers should not use DDVA HREC approval to urge, pressure or otherwise coerce personnel into volunteering.

### **Voluntary participation**

- As a volunteer for this research project, you are under no obligation to participate or continue to participate. You may withdraw from the project as explained in the participant information sheet.
- At no time must you feel pressured to participate or to continue if you do not wish to do so.

- If you do not wish to continue, you may let the researcher know why, but you are under no obligation to give reasons for not wanting to continue.

### **Consent**

- Before commencing the project you will have been given information, in the form of an information sheet or some other means, which explains the project, your role in it and any risks to which you may be exposed.
- You must be sure that you understand the information given to you and that you ask the researchers about anything of which you are not sure.
- Before you participate in the project you should also have been given the opportunity to express your consent, by signing a consent form or in some other way. You must be satisfied that the consent form or other opportunity is easy to understand and spells out what you are agreeing to. Again, you should keep a copy of the signed consent form, if given one.

### **Clinical trials**

- Defence requires that the researchers provide a nominal roll of study participants where the study is a clinical trial (eg when the researchers are trialling a new treatment or device). For trials conducted by large Defence institutions like the Defence Science and Technology Group, the Submarine and Underwater Medicine Unit, the Australian Defence Force Malaria and Infectious Disease Institute, or the Institute of Aviation Medicine, this roll is kept by them on behalf of Defence. These records will not be used to consider your medical employment standard or for compensation purposes.
- All DDVA HREC protocol files are securely stored in an electronic filing system which has restricted access. Your contact information will not be passed onto a third party without your permission.

### **Complaints**

- If at any time during your participation in the project you are worried about how the project is being run or how you are being treated, then you should speak to the researchers.
- If you don't feel comfortable doing this, you can contact the Executive Officer of DDVA HREC. Contact details are:

Executive Officer  
DDVA HREC  
Tel: (02) 6266 3807  
Email: [ddva.hrec@defence.gov.au](mailto:ddva.hrec@defence.gov.au)

### **More information**

If you would like to read more about the DDVA HREC, please visit the DDVA HREC website at: <http://www.defence.gov.au/Health/HREC/>