



Welcome Search Help About


Login Create an Account Update Your Journal

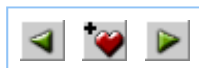
Not logged in.
(Create account, or use OpenID)

English • Español • Deutsch • Русский • →

Search:

Category: Username

mparent7777 ( [mparent7777](#)) wrote,
@ [2005-08-01](#) 13:49:00



Gulf veterans' brain cancer risk assessed

Posted on Sun, Jul. 31, 2005

Gulf veterans' brain cancer risk assessed

BY LAURA BEIL

The Dallas Morning News

DALLAS - (KRT) - Veterans involved in the demolition of chemical weapons in the first Iraq war appear to have an increased likelihood of dying from brain cancer, a new study has found.

The soldiers who were studied destroyed two caches of chemical munitions - later found to contain the toxic nerve gas sarin - in March 1991 at Khamisiyah, Iraq. The explosions left behind an invisible cloud of chemicals that wafted into the air. While sarin is known to have pronounced short-term health effects, there is no evidence so far that it causes cancer.

In the new study, researchers from the National Academy of Sciences and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs analyzed death records of the Army veterans who were exposed to the plume, comparing them with soldiers not exposed. After almost 10 years, one cause of death seemed out of the ordinary: veterans from Khamisiyah had twice the risk of dying from brain cancer.

"We certainly don't know that sarin is the cause," said Dr. William Page of the national academy. "There is an association."

The new study appears in July's American Journal of Public Health.

In this study, a two-fold increased risk meant that about 12 to 13 more soldiers among 100,000 exposed died from brain cancer than should have occurred naturally over the 10 years.

"This is an intriguing finding," Page said. "It's not definitive evidence."

But Dr. Robert Haley of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas points to other trends in the data that suggest the chemical exposure at Khamisiyah was responsible for the excess deaths from brain cancer. Haley was not involved in the current study, but has led other studies of illnesses among Gulf War veterans. He also sits on a Veterans Affairs research advisory committee for Gulf War illness.

In the Khamisiyah study, soldiers were more likely to develop brain cancer if they had longer exposure to the plume, a trend consistent with something in the air causing the illness. Also, Haley pointed out, most of the malignancies appeared during the latest years of the study, which researchers would also expect if the cancers were due to some exposure that had occurred at the beginning.

"That's a very convincing story for a causal effect," he said.

However, he and others say, more research is necessary to confirm the finding. Scientists need to see whether the trend continues over time, and investigate a possible mechanism on the cellular level that may explain how something at Khamisiyah may have led to cancer in some soldiers.

Haley said that brain cancer would be consistent with Gulf War veterans being exposed to an agent that created nerve cell damage. His research has found illness with an array of brain symptoms and increased rates of Lou Gehrig's disease.

"When you have brain cell injury, there is a possibility you'll have neurodegenerative illnesses associated with it," he said.

He cautioned that even in this study, brain cancer was still a rare cause of death.

"The average veteran should not become despondent and think they're going to get brain cancer," he said.

© 2005, The Dallas Morning News.

Visit The Dallas Morning News on the World Wide Web at <http://www.dallasnews.com>

Distributed by Knight Ridder/Tribune Information Services.

<http://www.duluthsuperior.com/mld/duluthsuperior/news/nation/12271389.htm>

[\(Post a new comment\)](#)

[Terms of Service](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Legal Information](#) [Site Map](#) [Browse Options](#)