

Anthrax vaccine and Gulf War illness symptoms in Captain Jean Tanner's Dover Air Force Base survey

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Abstract

Air Force Captain Jean Tanner surveyed 252 members of her unit at Dover Air Force Base in 2000 to attempt to study the unusual symptoms being reported by a large number of her unit members, symptoms she believed to be related to their anthrax vaccinations. Her data are evaluated in terms of classifications for Gulf War illness used by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and by Steele (2000). Even assuming that her non-respondents had no symptoms whatsoever, nearly nineteen percent of the unit would have been classified as having Gulf War illness by the CDC definition. Levels of illness were associated with outcomes, including seeking treatment, disability, submission of vaccine reaction reports, and exemption from further anthrax vaccinations. Had Tanner used even relatively small control groups of unvaccinated subjects, it is likely she would have detected significant differences between vaccinated and unvaccinated subjects, unless a third factor, such as large scale spraying of the base with insecticide, were responsible for symptoms observed in both groups. The results cast doubt on the safety of at least the lots of anthrax vaccine that were used at Dover Air Force Base at that time.

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Keywords: Anthrax vaccine, Gulf War illness, Dover Air Force Base