



Ministry
of Defence

Ministry of Defence
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21 February 2022

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email of 24 January 2022 requesting the following information:

"I'm enquiring to establish how many aircrew are currently serving in HM Armed Forces who have undergone the following surgery: 7H08-1 – Pleurectomy NEC. It would be preferable if it could be established whether this was to rectify history of Spontaneous Pneumothorax (lung collapse), though I would be interested to know how many aircrew in HM Armed Forces have undergone surgery 7H08-1, regardless of whether the reason for the surgery can be determined."

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence, and I can confirm that all the information in scope of your request is held.

Please note, section 40(2) has been applied to some of the information in order to protect personal information as governed by the Data Protection Act 1998. This is also in line with the Joint Service Publication 200 (JSP 200), in which numbers fewer than five are suppressed in order to reduce the possible inadvertent disclosure of individual identities. Section 40 is an absolute exemption and there is therefore no requirement to consider the public interest in making a decision to withhold the information.

As at 1 December 2021, **fewer than five** UK armed forces aircrew personnel had a Read code for pleurectomy entered into their electronic medical record, all of which had a previous Read code for spontaneous pneumothorax.

Under Section 16 (Advice and Assistance) you may find it useful to note the following:

Personnel include all UK armed forces aircrew personnel in service as at 1 December 2021.

Reservist personnel have been included. However, please note that the majority of reservist personnel receive their primary medical care from the NHS. Any personnel who were only seen by the NHS regarding this condition and have not informed the MOD were not included in the figures presented for the number of personnel with a Read code entered into their military medical record.

Information was derived from the Defence Medical Information Capability Programme (DMICP) which was rolled out in 2007. DMICP has a centralised data warehouse of Read coded information. It is the source of electronic, integrated healthcare records for primary healthcare and some MOD specialist care providers from which searches can be run.

Read code 7H04z-1 ('Pleurectomy – NEC') was used to identify personnel who have undergone a pleurectomy. Please note that, in a previous response to FOI 2022/15676, the Read code for 'Pleurectomy NEC' was incorrectly given as 7H08-1. The correct Read code for this procedure is 7H04z-1 and so the figures presented in this response are based on this code.

The following Read codes were used to identify personnel with a history of spontaneous pneumothorax:

- H52yz-1 ('Spontaneous pneumothorax NOS')
- H520 ('Spontaneous tension pneumothorax')
- H52y ('Other spontaneous pneumothorax')
- H52yz ('Other spontaneous pneumothorax NOS')
- Hyu71 ('[X]Other spontaneous pneumothorax')

Pleurectomy can be carried out in secondary care, therefore the figures provided here are a minimum. If a pleurectomy is carried out at an NHS or private hospital the hospital may then advise a military GP if a patient has the procedure in the form of a letter. A military GP can record this information in a number of ways:

- A paper letter may be filed in a paper medical record
- A letter may be scanned into the electronic patient record (in a PDF format)
- The GP may make noted in the electronic patient record as free text
- The GP can additionally enter a Read code relating to the procedure into the patient record

Please note that DMICP records cannot identify whether a pleurectomy was carried out specifically to rectify spontaneous pneumothorax, only that this condition was recorded prior to personnel receiving the procedure.

Only information that is Read coded is available for electronic searches. To identify text or scanned information would require an individual review of each patient record.

DMICP is a live data source and is subject to change. Date of extract of pleurectomy data: 27 January 2022, date of extract of spontaneous pneumothorax data: 2 February 2022.

Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) is the most accurate source for demographic information for UK armed forces personnel and was used to identify currently serving aircrew personnel.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance.

If you wish to complain about the handling of your request, or the content of this response, you can request an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.gov.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may raise your complaint directly to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website at <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely
Defence Statistics Health