



Ministry
of Defence

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FOI2023/03331
[REDACTED]

06 June 2023

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your request of 9 March 2023 for the following information:

- The number of UK Armed Forces personnel who had read codes relating to Crohn's Disease entered in their electronic patient medical record between 1 January 2015 and 1 March 2023.
- The number of UK Armed Forces personnel who had read codes relating to Crohn's Disease entered in their Pre-Service medical assessment patient medical record between 1 January 2015 and 1 March 2023.
- How many UK Armed Forces personnel who had read codes relating to Crohn's Disease since 1 January 2015 have been medically discharged."

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.

354 UK Armed Forces personnel had a Read code relating to Crohn's disease entered into their electronic patient medical record between 1 January 2015 and 1 March 2023.

As specified in JSP 950 Medical Policy, Joint Service Manual of Medical Fitness¹, Recruit candidates with a history of inflammatory bowel disease, including but not limited to unspecified regional enteritis, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis or ulcerative proctitis regardless of treatment (including surgery) are deemed UNFIT and thus excluded from joining the UK armed forces.

Please note; Service personnel who are diagnosed with Crohn's disease after joining service will have a risk assessment and as a result may have changes made to their medical employability and medical deployability gradings.

66 Regular personnel were medically discharged after having a Read code relating to Crohn's disease entered into their electronic patient medical record between 1 January 2015 and 31 January 2023 (latest data available). Please note, Crohn's disease may not have been listed as a cause of the medical discharge which may have been for an unrelated condition.

Under section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance) you may find it useful to note:

The figures provided in this response for personnel with a Read code relating to Crohn's disease are for all UK armed forces trained and untrained, regular and reservist personnel who had a code for Crohn's

¹ JSP 950 Medical Policy, Leaflet 6-7-7 Joint Service Manual of Medical Fitness [Section 4, the influence of particular conditions on medical entry for fitness, Annex E Gastrointestinal pre-entry]

disease entered into their DMICP record between 1 January 2015 and 1 March 2023 and is not limited to the currently serving population. This does not include entitled and non-entitled civilians, foreign service or non-UK military.

Reservist personnel have been included in the count of UK Armed Forces personnel with Read codes for Crohn's disease. However, the requestor should 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). 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.

Please note that if information was entered as free text in the patient record then it was not available in the DMICP data warehouse and was not retrieved using the search for Read codes.

The full list of Read codes used to search for personnel with Crohn's disease can be found in Annex A.

DMICP is a live data source and is subject to change. Data taken as at 1 March 2023. Date of extract: 6 April 2023.

Medical discharge figures presented are for UK Regular armed forces personnel (including Gurkhas and MPGS).

As at the time of request, the latest medical discharge data available was 31 January 2023.

Medical discharges are the result of several specialists (medical, occupational, psychological, personnel, etc.) coming to the conclusion that an individual is suffering from a medical condition that pre-empts their continued service in the armed forces. Statistics based on these discharges do not represent measures of true morbidity or pathology. At best they indicate a minimum burden of ill-health in the armed forces. Furthermore, the number and diversity of processes involved with administering a medical discharge introduce a series of time lags, as well as impact on the quality of data recorded.

The information on medical discharges was sourced from electronic personnel records from Defence Medical Information Capability Programme (DMICP) and manually entered paper documents from medical boards (FMed 23s). The primary purpose of these medical documents is to ensure the appropriate administration of each individual patient's discharge. Statistical analysis and reporting is a secondary function.

The earliest Crohn's disease Read code entered since 1 January 2015 was used to determine if there was a subsequent medical discharge. Personnel who had a Crohn's disease Read code entered prior to January 2015 and medically discharged between 1 January 2015 and 31 January 2023 have not been included.

Please note, Crohn's disease may not have been listed as a cause of the subsequent medical discharge which may have been for an unrelated condition.

Defence Statistics release annual updates on medical discharges in the UK armed forces as an Official Statistic publication. The last statistical release was on 14 July 2022 which presented data up to 31 March 2022. The latest report can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/medical-discharges-among-uk-service-personnel-statistics-index>

Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) is the most accurate source for demographic information for UK Armed Forces personnel and was used to gather information on when an individual was serving.

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 (Analysis Directorate)