THE HEALTH EFFECTS OF WAR AND THE MEDICAL LITERATURE. MT Donohoe*, M Wang*, and R Roukhbakhsh*, General Internal Medicine, Oregon Health Sciences University*, Portland, and Department of Surgery, University of Southern California*, Los Angeles.

The medical and public health consequences of war are numerous and account for a great deal of suffering. Medical education has paid scant attention to these consequences, necessitating self-education for those who are interested, which often leads to a search for pertinent articles through a computerized database, such as Medline. Medline was searched to determine the number and types of articles available which pertained to war.

The Medline database covering July, 1994 through October, 1995 was searched by combining the keywords military, militarism, war, warfare, nuclear warfare/weapons, chemical warfart/weapons, biological warfare/weapons, holocaust, torture, human rights abuses, refugees, and peace. A classification system was constructed and all 1417 English language citations articles retrieved were grouped by content, as suggested by title, by two of the authors (MTD and MW). Agreement was greater than 95%.

A subsample of abstracts and articles was checked to verify the accuracy of this method, which resulted in the reclassification of 11% of articles originally considered not to pertain to war and 5% of studies originally considered to cover military medicine and the war-related health problems of soldiers, as clinical studies of non-war-related health problems in soldiers and veterans.

Thirty-five percent of articles dealt with the effects of war on civilians, such as trauma, public health disturbances, torture, war crimes, and non-conventional methods of warfare, 20% covered military medicine and health problems specific to soldiers, 28% were not related to aggression between groups or nations, but instead related to "the war on tobacco," or other non-military uses of the term war, and 7% were studies of non-war-related health problems using soldiers or veterans as research subjects. Only 3% dealt with peace or the ethics of war. None focused on education surrounding war-related issues.

Less than 1/3 of articles found using a keyword search of the Medline database for articles relating to the health effects of war covered the effects on civilians. A very small number covered ethics and peacemaking, and none dealt specifically with war education for health professionals. Given the significant global morbidity and mortality resulting from militarization and war, war education is underestimated in the medical literature, a finding which parallels its absence from most medical school curricula.

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