

VISN 6 PILOT STUDY
OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM/OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM
VETERANS HEALTH AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT
OMB FORM 2900-XXXX
VA FORM 10-21091

B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

However, Section B is required for most research collections, program evaluations and other collections containing surveys, censuses, or otherwise employing statistical estimation techniques such as sampling or imputation, or other statistical estimation technique.

1. Provide a numerical estimate of the potential respondent universe and describe any sampling or other respondent selection method to be used. Data on the number of entities (e.g., households or persons) in the universe and the corresponding sample are to be provided in tabular format for the universe as a whole and for each stratum. Indicate expected response rates. If this has been conducted previously include actual response rates achieved.

As of the end of the 4th quarter of Fiscal Year 2005, 17,150 OEF/OIF veterans had enrolled for VHA services in the VISN 6 catchment area. According to the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC). Since 37% of eligible veterans have enrolled for VHA health care benefits, the VISN 6 regional population estimate (respondent universe) for eligible survey participants is 46,351. Dr. Kang's Office of Environmental Epidemiology has agreed to extract a random sample of 8500 OEF/OIF veterans with addresses in the VISN 6 catchment area, since it is not feasible to survey the entire population. Dr. Kang is an epidemiologist and Director of the War Related Illness and Injury Study Center in Washington, D.C. and is very familiar with random sample extraction. However, the national VHA SHEP response rate for the identified subset of OEF/OIF veterans was only 21%, so we are also testing the effect of an advance letter to 2000 of the selected participants. This letter will alert selected veterans that an important survey will be coming and will ask in advance for their participation. Because only the survey binder color will be different from the rest of the sample, the survey will remain anonymous but the effect of the advance letter on response rates will be assessed for future use based on cost effectiveness.

2. Describe the procedures for the collection of information, including:

- **Statistical methodology for stratification and sample selection**
- **Estimation procedure**
- **Degree of accuracy needed**
- **Unusual problems requiring specialized sampling procedures**
- **Any use of less frequent than annual data collection to reduce burden**

There will be no specific stratification procedures used in this pilot survey. Sample selection will be a random sampling of the universe of VA-eligible OEF/OIF veterans from the DMDC database who reside in the VISN 6 catchment area.

3. Describe methods to maximize response rate and to deal with issues of non-response. The accuracy and reliability of information collected must be shown to be adequate for intended uses. For collections based on sampling, a special justification must be provided for any collection that will not yield "reliable" data that can be generalized to the universe studied.

Key elements of Dillman's "Total Design Method" (TDM) have been incorporated in the design of this pilot study to optimize response rates and to promote generalizability of results. Specifically, color letterhead will be used on invitations to participate, investigator signatures will be printed in blue ink, helpful information about benefits will be provided in the cover letter, and specific individuals (co-investigators) will be identified for more information or clinical contact. Further, the survey will be printed in 3 colors, formatted for ease of completion, and has been limited to 8 easy-to-read pages. Finally, the followup letter to be mailed to the whole sample 2 weeks after the survey is mailed will both thank participants who have returned the initial survey and request participation by those that have not yet returned the survey. Please see attached sample letters.

4. Describe any tests of procedures or methods to be undertaken. Testing is encouraged as an effective means of refining collections to minimize burden and improve utility. Tests must be approved if they call for answers to identical questions of 10 or more individuals.

We have asked 3 Global War on Terror veterans to complete the survey and incorporated their feedback. Two co-investigators and one project manager at SRBI have also completed the survey to help assess respondent burden, which is estimated at 15-20 minutes based upon our limited testing.

5. Provide the name and telephone number of individuals consulted on statistical aspects of the design and the name of the agency unit, contractor(s), grantee(s), or other person(s) who will actually collect and/or analyze the information for the agency.

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