



THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

1 200 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

MAR 8 2002

HEALTH AFFAIRS

MEMORANDUM FOR EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, ARMED FORCES EPIDEMIOLOGICAL BOARD

SUBJECT: Screening for Sickle Cell Disease at Accession

The Service Safety Centers have requested a change to DoD policy to test all recruits at accession for sickle cell disease (SCD) and sickle cell trait (SCT). Present DoD policy precludes testing for SCD/SCT at accession. I request that the Armed Forces Epidemiological Board (AFEB) consider and make recommendations on the following questions:

- (1) Is the present accession medical history and physical exam effective in identifying individuals with SCD? If not, would a more rigorous medical history and physical examination be adequate?
- (2) Is testing for SCD at accession more appropriate than identification of individuals with SCD after they are accessed with disposition contingent on demonstrated performance, future risks, and deployability?
- (3) If a testing program is recommended at accession:
 - a. Would universal screening be indicated?
 - b. What is the ethical responsibility of DoD concerning counseling for those identified with SCD and SCT (recognizing that testing for SCD will also identify individuals with SCT)?
- (4) What is the absolute risk of sudden death during training for an individual with SCT?
- (5) When in the basic training cycle have exertional deaths associated with SCT occurred?
- (6) Have exertional deaths associated with SCT occurred after basic training?

As part of the deliberation process, the AFEB should receive briefings from the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Management Policy, DoD Medical Examination Review Board, US Military Entrance Processing Command, the Accession Medical Standards and Research Activity, and appropriate subject matter experts both within DoD and the scientific community. My point of contact is Timothy Corcoran, Lieutenant Colonel, USAF, Medical Corps, (703) 681-1703, fax (703) 681-3655, or email Timothy.Corcoran@ha.osd.mil.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "William Winkenwerder, Jr.".

William Winkenwerder, Jr., MD