CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE AMONG MILITARY AND NON MILITARY ENTITIES DURING OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM: OBSERVATIONS FROM THE DEPLOYED CARDIOLOGIST

Poster Contributions
Hall C
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Background: Operation Enduring Freedom is an ongoing military campaign involving multinational military and non military entities (NME) deployed to Afghanistan. Cardiovascular (CV) complaints are the primary non traumatic reason for aeromedical evacuation (AE) therefore the US Military forward deploys a cardiologist with noninvasive testing capabilities to evaluate these symptoms on site. We sought to evaluate the prevalence of cardiac disorders seen in the deployed setting, what type of individuals present with these complaints and what disorders were more likely to result in AE.

Methods: Data was collected from all patient encounters seen by the Theater Cardiology Consultant in Bagram, Afghanistan from September 2010 to September 2013 including demographics, cardiac diagnoses and disposition. Afghani Nationals and children were excluded from analysis.

Results: 1944 cardiac patients with median age of 40 (Range 18-80) years were encountered. 1502 (77%) were military and 442 (23%) were NME. The most common complaint for all patients was chest pain (35%). Additionally, enlisted members presented most often for syncope/presyncope (34%) or palpitations (14%); officers for palpitations (14%) or cardiac risk factor management (12%); and NME for acute coronary syndrome (15%) or syncope/presyncope (8%). 381 (20%) patients underwent AE (16% of all military, 32% of all NME) with most common diagnoses of acute coronary syndrome, congestive heart failure and aortic dissection. 1563 (80%) patients returned to duty (81% of all military, 68% of all NME) with most common diagnoses of chest pain, palpitations and syncope/presyncope.

Conclusion: CV disorders are common in the deployed setting. A forward deployed cardiologist was highly effective at returning military subjects to duty although a fair amount of NME with severe CV diagnoses required AE. Dedicated cardiologists in an austere setting are a force multiplier with a positive impact on the military mission.