

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Report of Casualty (DD Form 1300) is the official record of death for all military personnel who die while serving on active duty (appendix 1). The Military Service casualty offices collect some medical information (e.g., death certificates) and provide monthly automated data files containing an individual record for each completed DD Form 1300 to the Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (DIOR) at the Washington Headquarters Services of the Department of Defense (DoD) (1). These data are incorporated into the Worldwide Casualty System (WCS) that has been maintained and operated by the DIOR since 1979. The DIOR is the source of statistical information for the DoD and publishes periodic summaries of all active duty casualties by type (hostile and nonhostile) and manner of death, branch of Military Service, geographic location, and year of occurrence (2). These casualty data, routinely compiled on a fiscal year (FY) basis (October 1 through September 30), categorize manner of nonhostile deaths by accident (hereafter referred to as unintentional injury), illness, homicide, self-inflicted (hereafter referred to as suicide), undetermined, or pending. Also included is basic decedent demographic information such as sex, race, pay grade, and age at death.

Beary et al. (3) utilized data from the WCS to describe the ten leading causes of death for active duty military personnel for the two-year period 1981-1982. The purpose of their study was to calculate estimates of associated costs for major causes of mortality and to use these data to assist in the formulation of health policy. Unfortunately, neither the Beary et al. (3) study nor the DoD periodic summaries (2) provide detailed epidemiological or risk information.