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False data regarding illnesses, injuries, and medical evacuations of Polish soldiers deployed to Afghanistan

Comment to:

Analysis of the causes of medical evacuation of injured and sick soldiers of the Polish Military Contingent in the Islamic State of Afghanistan taking part in International Security Assistance Force operations

Radosław Ziemia

Med Sci Monit, 2012; 18(4): SR22-28

Types and incidence of diseases among soldiers IX and X of the Polish Military Contingent in Afghanistan

Radosław Ziemia

Med Sci Monit, 2012; 18(7): SR29-33

Dear Editor,

The data presented in the studies by Ziemia, concerning illnesses, injuries, and medical evacuations of Polish military personnel deployed to Afghanistan in the period 2010–2011, is false and it is misleading readers of Medical Science Monitor. As a person who was serving in Afghanistan and was holding the post of a consultant to the Commander of Polish Military Contingent on epidemiology, I take full responsibility for my words. I would like to inform you that from 2010 to 2011, none of the Polish soldiers deployed to Afghanistan had been medically evacuated from the mission area back to their home country due to such diseases as leishmaniasis, leukemia, lymphoma, systemic lupus erythematosus or hepatitis B.

“Cutaneous, visceral or mixed leishmaniasis affected 1.1% of the soldiers. Because of the complications of visceral leishmaniasis, 8.9% of patients were evacuated. There were isolated cases of the manifestation of chronic diseases such as hepatitis B, leukemia and lymphoma, systemic lupus erythematosus...”

Med Sci Monit, 2012; 18(7): SR30

The afore-mentioned disease entities have not occurred among members of PMC Afghanistan within the analyzed period.

„In the case of soldiers stationed in the South Central Zone in Iraq in 2003–2004, symptoms of acute gastro-intestinal inflammation occurred with similar frequency, but it was most commonly induced by enterotoxigenic E. coli, representing over 50% of the causes [1].”

Med Sci Monit, 2012; 18(7): SR31–32

The author cites an article by Bolton et al. [1], whereas the above-mentioned part of the text comes from the article by Korzeniewski K: Incidence of diseases and traumas in the population of Polish soldiers treated in the Field Hospital of the Multinational Division Center South In Iraq. Lek Wojsk, 2004; 80(3): 203–207 [in Polish] or Korzeniewski et al: Environmental Health Hazards on the Territory of Iraq Among Soldiers of Stabilization Forces. Pol J Environ Stud, 2007; 16(3c): 64–68.

“A total of 101 soldiers were diagnosed with dermal, visceral or mixed form of leishmaniasis. Finally, 9 soldiers (8.9%) were evacuated due to visceral leishmaniasis complications. Other diseases... were individual cases of manifestation of chronic diseases. These included: viral hepatitis, leukemias and lymphomas, systematic lupus erythematosus...”

Med Sci Monit, 2012; 18(4): SR25

The data is false.

“As many as 565 (5.49%) of the total of 10294 contingent soldiers were evacuated during the analyzed period. Of these, 29% of evacuation cases were due to combat injuries, 23% to complications of respiratory tract infection, 11% to mental health problems, 11% to chronic neuralgias, 12% to complications of acute gastrointestinal infections, 4% to non-combat injuries, 3% to dental and maxillofacial problems, 2% to dermatological problems and 2% to leishmaniasis”.

Med Sci Monit, 2012; 18(4): SR22

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The data is false. From 01 January 2010 to 31 December 2011, the number of Polish military personnel medically evacuated from Afghanistan was exactly 246 people, i.e. the author overstates the number by more than 100%!!!

What puzzles me is where the author of the two above-mentioned articles received the inaccurate data (given the fact that he has never participated in the military operation in Afghanistan) and how it is possible that the incorrect information has not been verified by Medical Science Monitor reviewers.

I would like to ask you to comment on my letter as well as to withdraw the afore-mentioned articles as soon as possi-

ble or at least to include information that the data has been falsified by the author.

I am really looking forward to your reply.

Sincerely,
Col. Krzysztof Korzeniewski MD, PhD,
Polish Military Contingent in Afghanistan,
Professor of Military Institute of Medicine,
Warsaw, Poland,
Head of Epidemiology and
Tropical Medicine Department,
Gdynia, Poland, e-mail: kktropmed@wp.pl

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