



The Air Force Health Study Assets Research Program

*Committee on the Management of the Air Force Health Study Data and Specimens--Report to Congress,
Board on the Health of Select Populations, Institute of Medicine*

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The Air Force Health Study (AFHS) is a longitudinal, prospective epidemiologic study of more than 2,700 men followed for approximately 20 years. This cohort participated in up to six intensive physical examinations with high rates of compliance. In addition to a complete record of clinical measurements and observations collected at these exams, serum and other biological samples were obtained and preserved. Extensive questionnaires addressing health, lifestyle, and socioeconomic status were administered during each exam, and other information was obtained about the participants' employment, families and offspring, and potential sources of environmental exposures. While the study was completed in 2006, the extensive health data linked to several types of longitudinally collected biologic specimens - some 91,000 serum, whole blood, urine, semen, and adipose tissue specimens - remain a resource for additional research. The AFHS assets are exceptional in the sheer multitude and range of types of information available for each participant. The longitudinal nature of the AFHS - with its extended follow-up, high rates of retention, and repeat biological samples - provides a valuable opportunity for research beyond the original aims of the study. Currently, the Institute of Medicine is the custodian of these assets.

The Air Force Health Study Assets Research Program outlines the feasibility and advisability of maintaining the biospecimens based on interest generated from the general scientific community and results of pilot projects and other research projects using the AFHS assets. According to this report, sustaining access to the AFHS biospecimens and data benefits the veterans community and the public at large, who will gain from the information derived from studies of the assets. . This report discusses the scientific value of the AFHS data and biospecimens and the lessons learned in managing access to the assets.

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