

Learn About Military Care

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) has been described as the “signature wound” of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) in Iraq. Modern body armor has greatly enhanced a warrior’s chance of survival after sustaining a TBI. However, with increased awareness and screening measures, mild TBI — otherwise known as concussion — has become a clinical challenge for those who are charged with caring for chronic symptomatic mild TBI patients.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) affects thousands of individuals who have experienced a traumatic event. Our nation’s most recent generation of deploying men and women are no exception. The Department of Defense (DoD) has an increased need for psychological health care providers, and many non-military psychological health care providers have answered the call to treat military service members and veterans returning from deployment.



Source: Medical With Family

Below are tips, resources and educational information for civilian health care professionals about TBI and PTSD and how to approach military patients.

Getting Ready

Research and develop an understanding of the experiences and exposures that America’s most recent combat veterans have undergone in an effort to recognize the connection between certain health effects and military service.

Become familiar with military culture, including military ranks and the difference between National Guard and Reserves.

Common fundamentals distinguish military culture from many others. Cultural norms include a high standard of discipline, a professional ethos of loyalty and self-sacrifice, a distinct set of ceremony and etiquette, and an emphasis on group cohesion and esprit de corps that connects service members to each other.

These cultural basics can make it challenging for providers and clinicians to help returning warriors with a TBI or with psychological health concerns such as PTSD — especially when compounded with everyday stressors from their civilian lives.

Overview	Web Site
Become familiar with military ranks and insignias	http://www.defenselink.mil/specials/insignias/
Be aware of the services and programs offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)	www.va.gov www.ncptsd.va.gov
Review the resources that are available from the DoD, including TRICARE services	www.tricare.mil
Develop partnerships with staff at nearby DoD installations	www.nationalresourcedirectory.org

General Considerations in Care¹

Build a relationship with the service member first. As with any patient-provider relationship, the interactions between service member or veteran and health care professional will be the starting point for care.

Work from a patient-centered perspective, and take care to find out the current concerns of the patient. What are his or her worries or fears? What practical solutions can you offer for specific problems?

Treatment Tips and Resources

Help the service member or veteran you’re treating stay focused on his or her course of treatment. He or she is likely to feel overwhelmed with a variety of problems — from family and friends, to workplace, finances and physical health. These problems can draw much of his or her attention away from the tasks of therapy and could create a

climate of mounting stress that interferes with resolving symptoms. Helping warriors identify, prioritize and take action steps to address their concerns will benefit both patient and health professional and smooth immediate or eventual reintegration into life at home and reduce the likelihood of future problems.

Treating Service Members with a Chronic Symptomatic Mild TBI

Education is the first step in treating anyone with a concussion. The patient should be made aware of possible symptoms and the expected course of recovery. While many patients with a concussion can improve in minutes or days, some people may take up to three months.² Rest is one of the most important steps to take at this time as well as avoidance of further injury. For more information on early treatment of concussion, please refer to the **Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center Web site**.

Treating Service Members with PTSD

Education is the first step in treating anyone with PTSD. The patient should be made aware of possible symptoms and the expected course of recovery. While there are a number of treatment options for PTSD and as patient response to treatment can vary, some treatments have been shown to have more benefit for patients than others. The main treatments for people with PTSD are counseling or psychotherapy (“talk” therapy), medications or both. To learn more about these treatments, refer to **PTSD Treatment Options** or the **Management of Post-Traumatic Stress VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guideline**.

Resource List

Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE) Outreach Center	The DCoE Outreach Center provides in-depth information and resources related to the spectrum of PH matters and TBI. Health consultants are available 24/7 to respond to specific research requests by phone, e-mail, chat and fax.
Military Health System (MHS)	The MHS is a unique partnership of medical educators, medical researchers and health care providers and their support personnel worldwide.
VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guidelines	The VA/DoD make available evidence-based clinical practice guidelines for download on PTSD, post-deployment health, and concerns.
PTSD101	A Web-based educational resource that is designed for busy practitioners who provide services to military men and women and their families as they recover from combat stress or other traumatic events.
Mental Health Reactions After Disaster: A Fact Sheet for Providers	An educational resource for health professionals.
Working with Trauma Survivors: What workers Need to Know	An educational resource for health professionals.

Sources

1 NCPTSD Iraq War Clinician Guide,
<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/manuals/iraq-war-clinician-guide.asp>

2 Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC) Fact Sheet,
<http://dvbic.gbkdev.com/images/pdfs/080605-dvbic-fact-sheet-aka-facts-flyer-with-our-m.aspx>
 last accessed December 22, 2009.

Additional Resources

Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center

<http://www.dvbic.org>

National Institute of Mental Health

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml>

Afterdeployment.org

<http://www.afterdeployment.org>

Walter Reed Army Institute of Research – Psychiatry & Neurosciences

<http://wrair-www.army.mil/Psychiatry-and-Neuroscience>

Military Treatment Facility Locator

<http://www.tricare.mil/mtf>

Center for Deployment Psychology - Password required

<http://www.deploymentpsych.org/>