

Sidney Kimmel Medical College - Thomas Jefferson University

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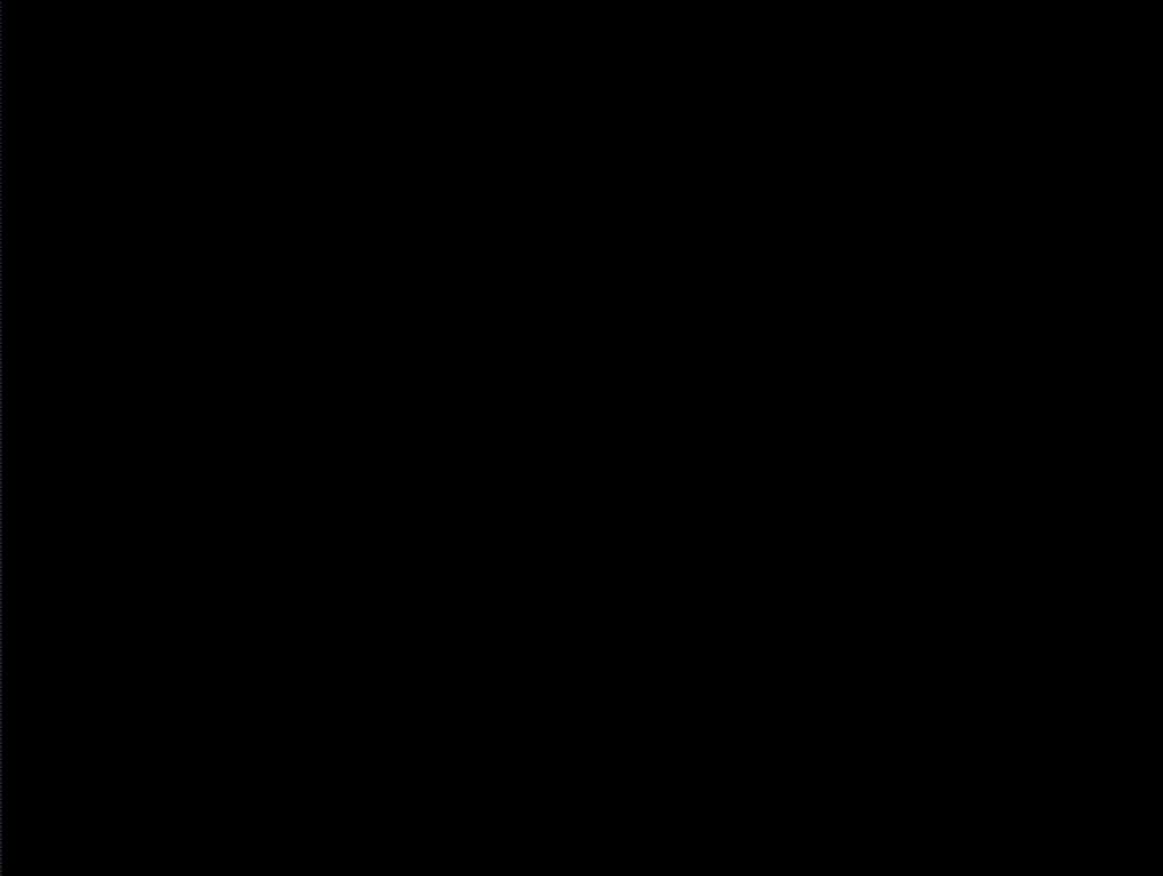
Veterans' Healthcare: The Role of Community Medicine

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Community medicine is a weak link in veterans' healthcare





Veterans' Healthcare Quiz

Which of the following statements are *true*?



One of every ten U.S. adults (10%) 18 years and older has served in the military.

21.2 million veterans in 2012* plus
1.4 million active duty military

One of every six males (16%) between the ages of 35 and 65 years has served in the military.* (* NCVAS)

Eight of every ten veterans (80%) receive most of their healthcare from civilian non-VA sources.

40 percent are registered with the VA
Most are insured. (Private, Medicare, Medicaid)

a) All of the above.

Which of the following statements are *true*?



- a. Few community healthcare providers routinely ask their patients if they or someone close to them has served in the military.
- b. Patients don't usually identify themselves as veterans without being asked.
- c. Community physicians frequently believe that veterans' healthcare does not pertain to them or their specialty.
- d. All of the above.

“Veterans’ health issues do not pertain to me or to my specialty.”



One-third of military personnel have children under the age of 11 years.

☑ False

“Veterans’ health issues do not pertain to me or to my specialty.”



Greater than 15 percent of active duty military personnel are female.

☑ False

Civilian patients are not identified as veterans because:



- a. Military health history and veterans' cultural awareness are not usually included in teaching *curriculum* and CME.
- b. Most electronic health records do not include military health history questions.
- c. The VA does not require veterans' competency training before healthcare personnel rotate through their facilities. – *70% of US medical grads.*
- d. Many providers feel insecure when responding to affirmative answers.
- e. All of the above.

When civilian patients are not identified as veterans, what are the likely results?



- a. Diagnostic errors
 - b. Lack of proper referral
 - c. Difficulty tracking medical data.
 - d. Loss of opportunity to create patient rapport.
- All of the above.

Prior military service can affect which of the following?



- a. Past medical history
- b. Present medical history
- c. Occupational history
- d. Psychiatric history
- e. Social and family history
- f. Preventive screening and anticipatory guidance

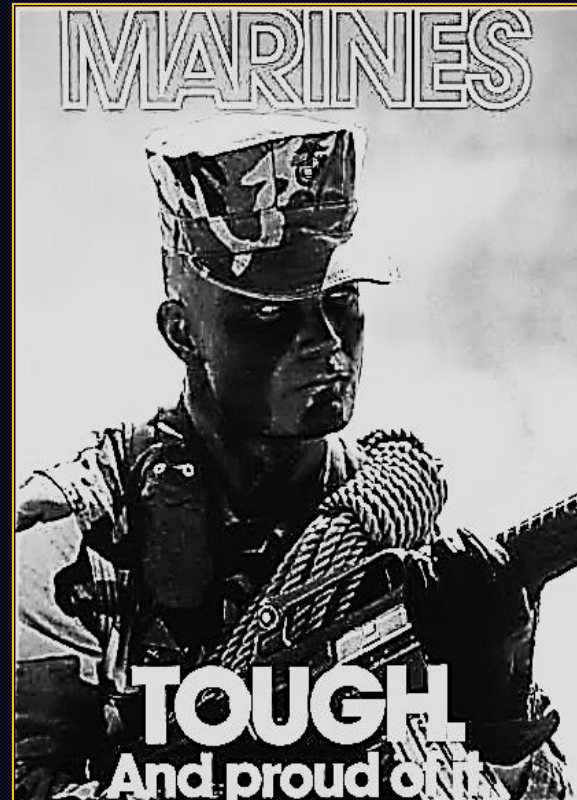
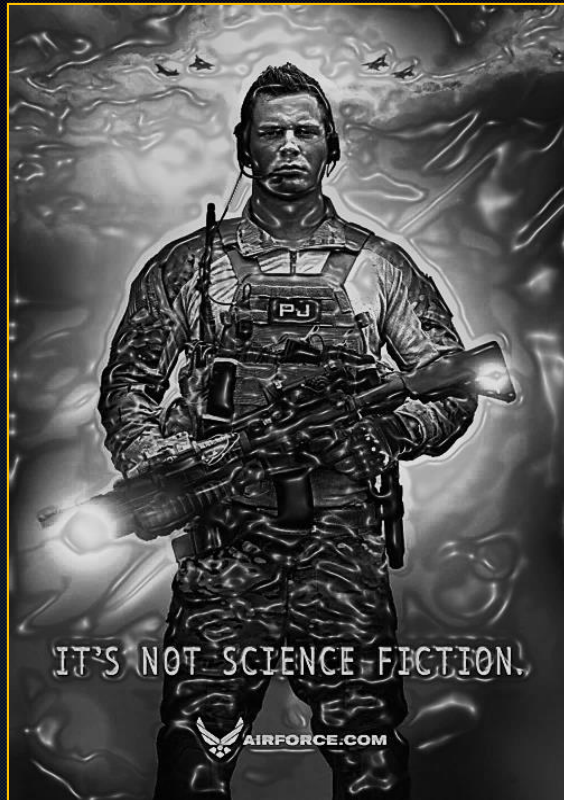
All of the above.

Veterans Demographic

- ▶ **Male Veterans** = 20,013,903 Median Age: Veterans **64** Non-Veterans 41.
- ▶ **Female Veterans** = 1,583,048; Median Age: Veteran **49** Non-Veterans 47.
- ▶ Ethnicity: Whites over-represented; Hispanics under-represented.
- ▶ Marital status: Same as non-vets but females have 2x divorce rate of nonvets.
- ▶ Education: 79% of female and 61% of male veterans had completed some college, a Bachelor's degree, or an advanced degree.
- ▶ Income: Veterans of both sexes had higher personal incomes than non-Veterans. (Median earnings men: \$51,000 vs \$46,000)
- ▶ Health Insurance: Male and female Veterans had lower uninsured rates than non-Veterans in 2011. (6% vs 20%)

Erroneous Public Perception

Professional Soldiers *ARE* Highly Trained
to Withstand Physical and Emotional Stress... *BUT*



45 Seconds of Two 12 Month Tours in Afghanistan



Helmet-cam

'UGH. I MISS IT.'

Transitioning from military to civilian life, and
from camaraderie to isolation

April 19, 2014



The Washington Post

Washington Post and
Kaiser Foundation
Nationwide Survey of Iraq
and Afghanistan Vets

64%

of those who
served in combat
feel disconnected
from civilian life

33%

think about
their service in
war every day

56%

miss something
from their time at
war, mainly their
fellow soldiers and
camaraderie

54%

of injured veterans
do not like talking
about their service
with casual
acquaintances



PG-1 Hartford Hospital



Camp Alpha - Ton Son Nhut

Miscalculation in career planning

5 weeks from civilian (PG-1) to Vietnam arrival

Entered military: 17 July

Arrived in Vietnam: 27 August

Cu Chi 25th Infantry Division

1st Bde, 2nd Bn/14th Inf



Life in the suburbs:
900 Infantry, 30 Medics, One Doctor



Transportation



Lodging



Dining



Amenities



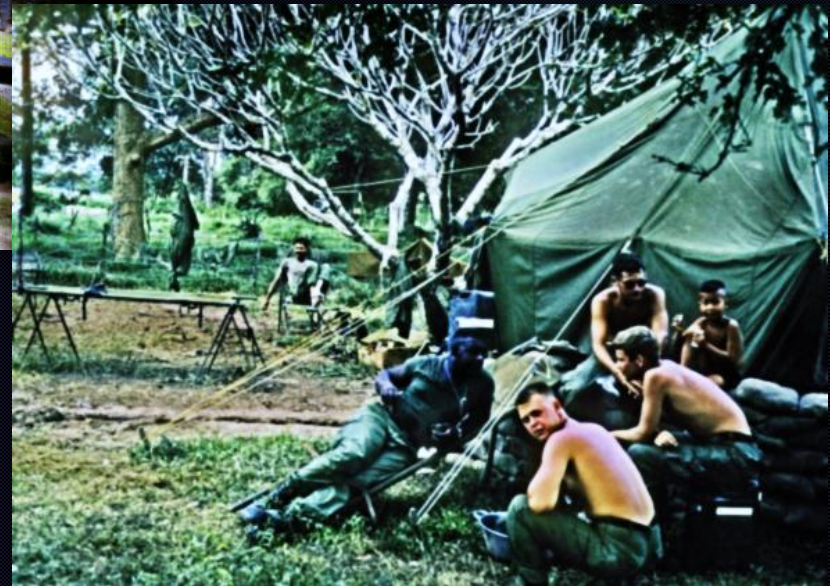
Officers' Latrine

Medics 2/14th Infantry



Forward Battalion Aid Stations

2nd/14th Infantry



Forward Battalion Aid Stations

Scenic View



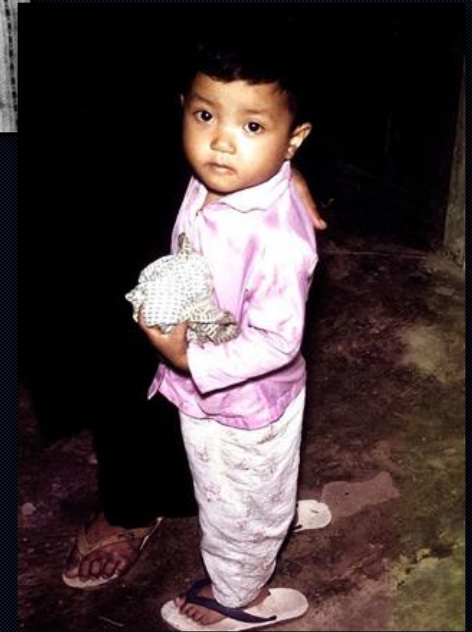
Water View



Forward Aid Station Operation Attleboro

Garden View





November
2013



The Unasked Question

- One of every ten adults is a veteran.
- Eighty percent of veterans receive most of their healthcare from civilian doctors, *but*
- Most physicians do not *routinely* ask their patients, "Have you or someone close to you ever served in the military" and then document followup.
- *Public health* consequences may be significant because large numbers of families may be affected.



What Community Providers Need to Know

Occupational History

Physical and Psychological Sequelae

Psychological History

Social History

Family – Job/School – Recreation and Risk Taking

Occupational History: Essentials

- *Did you or someone close to you serve?*
- WHEN did you serve?
- WHERE did you serve?
- WHAT was your job description?
- DO YOU BELIEVE you were injured or have symptoms now as the result of your time in the military?
- Did you receive any TREATMENT?
- Are you registered at the VA?

Traditional Military Work Hazards

Trauma: Enemy, friendly, accidental, and training



Traditional Military Work Hazards: Booby traps and land mines



Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

- ▶ Usually from **blast injury**
- ▶ **Immediate Symptoms**
 - ▶ Dizziness, confusion, LOC, seeing “stars”, transient loss of memory.
- ▶ **Later Symptoms**
 - ▶ Persistent headache
 - ▶ Sensitivity– light and noise
 - ▶ Visual disturbance
 - ▶ Loss of balance
 - ▶ Low energy
 - ▶ Tinnitus
 - ▶ Depression, apathy, anger, anxiety
 - ▶ Impaired cognition



EXPOSURE to Environmental Hazards

▶ Asbestos



▶ Industrial solvents



▶ Lead



▶ Radiation



▶ Fuels



▶ PCBs



▶ Vibration



▶ Noise



▶ Chemical resistant paint



Toxic Exposures Not Always Disclosed by Military and Not Always Related to Combat

Army Apologizes to Troops Exposed to US-Designed Chemical Weapons in Iraq



After it was reported that more than 600 service members suffered from chemical exposure in Iraq, the undersecretary of the Army issued an apology this week. The scandal goes deeper with its lack of proper medical treatment for these service members.

More Than 600 Reported Chemical Exposure in Iraq, Pentagon Acknowledges

By C. J. CHIVERSNOV. 6, 2014
nytimes.com | Nov. 6, 2014

More than 600 American service members since 2003 have reported to military medical staff members that they believe they were exposed to chemical warfare agents in Iraq, but the Pentagon failed to recognize the scope of the reported cases or offer adequate tracking and treatment to those who may have been injured, defense officials say.

The Pentagon's disclosure abruptly changed the scale and potential costs of the United States' encounters with abandoned chemical weapons during the occupation of Iraq, episodes the military had for more than a decade kept from view.

Navy sailors have radiation sickness after Japan rescue

By Laura Italiano and Kerry Murtha

December 22, 2013 | 6:40am



Crew members scrub contaminated snow off the deck of USS Ronald Reagan in March 2011 during a humanitarian mission off tsunami-stricken Japan.

U.S.

Troops Who Cleaned Up Radioactive Islands Can't Get Medical Care

By DAVE PHILLIPS JAN. 28, 2012



In a photograph provided by Tim Sneider, a military film crew dressed him in a protective suit and respirator on the day he arrived on Eniwetok Atoll in 1978. During the four months he cleaned up fallout from nuclear tests there, he wore only shorts and a sun hat.

Agent Orange (Dioxin) - 2.5 Million Exposed



Agent Orange (Dioxin) – 2.5 M Exposed



- **Birth defects in offspring – esp. spina bifida**
- **Amyloidosis**
 - Chronic B Cell Leukemias
 - Chlorachne
- **Diabetes Type II**
- **Hodgkin's Disease**
- **Ischemic Heart Disease**
 - Lou Gherig's Disease
 - Multiple Myeloma
 - Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma
- **Parkinson's Disease**
 - Peripheral Neuropathy
 - Porphyria Cutanae Tarda
- **Prostate Cancer**
- **Respiratory Cancers - Lung, Bronchus, Larynx**
 - Soft Tissue Sarcomas – not osteosarcoma

Gulf War Service



Exposures

- Vaccinations
- Oil well fires – smoke and petroleum
- Fine dust and sand particles
- Chemical and biological weapons
- Depleted uranium
- Noise
- Chemical agent resistant paint
- Pesticides
- Infectious diseases
- Heat injuries

Symptoms

- ▶ Chronic Fatigue
- ▶ Fibromyalgia
- ▶ Functional gastrointestinal disorders
- ▶ **Chronic Multisymptom Illness**
- ▶ Weight loss, fatigue, CVD, myalgia, arthralgia, headache, neurologic and psychiatric disorders, sleep disturbance, dermatologic disorders, respiratory disorders.

Infectious Disease History

- ▶ Did you develop any unusual infectious illnesses while on active duty?
- ▶ Treated?
- ▶ Residual?
- ▶ Blood transfusions?

Infectious Diseases

Gulf War and Afghanistan



- ▶ Malaria
- ▶ Brucellosis
- ▶ *Campylobacter jejuni*
- ▶ *Coxiella Burnetii*
(Q Fever)
- ▶ *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*
- ▶ Nontyphoid Salmonella
- ▶ Shigella
- ▶ Visceral Leishmaniasis
- ▶ West Nile Virus

Infectious Diseases

Common vectors



Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Indigenous vectors



Now includes HIV/AIDS

Vaccinations and Preventive Medications

- ▶ Anthrax
- ▶ Smallpox
- ▶ Pyridostigmine
 - ▶ GI, Musculoskeletal, Neurologic, Respiratory Symptoms
- ▶ Mefloquin (Lariam)
 - ▶ Severe and sometimes chronic symptoms (many years): Anxiety, paranoia, depression, hallucinations, abnormal dreams.
 - ▶ May also have tinnitus, vertigo, seizures, insomnia.
 - ▶ May mimic PTSD



Social History



- ▶ Home - Work - Recreation and Risk-taking
- ▶ Do you have a spouse, partner, or children?
- ▶ Were they affected by your deployment?
- ▶ Are any of them receiving psychological or medical services?
- ▶ Do they require services they are not currently receiving?

“Everyone in the family serves!”



- Long deployments.
- Concerns about safety.
- Uncertainty about the future.
- Single parenthood.
- Marital and financial stresses.

Mothers



Fathers



Spouses and Partners



Even



But, especially *the children.*







Family Challenges Include:



Social History

- Separation and divorce.
- Domestic violence and substance abuse.
- Guns in the home.
- Depression and anxiety.
- Suicide.
- Insecurity.
- Balancing spouses' careers.
 - Military-nonmilitary
 - Military-Military
- Unemployment and financial difficulties.

Children's Challenges Include:



- School and behavioral problems.
- Depression and anxiety.
- Multiple moves, schools, friends, and doctors.
- Parental stress and separations.
- Adolescents: Acting out.
- Child care and extended family.
- Changes in family structure.
- Dealing with “damaged” parents.

15 Percent of Active Duty Military Personnel are Women



15 Percent of Active Duty Military Personnel are Women.

.....*some of them are mothers*

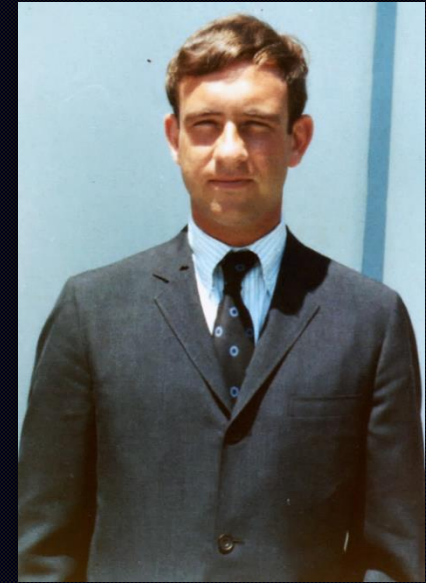


Psychological History



- ▶ Believe there is a problem?
- ▶ Anxiety?
- ▶ Depression?
- ▶ Substance abuse?
- ▶ Suicidal ideation?
- ▶ Ever received psychological counselling?

Imposter ?



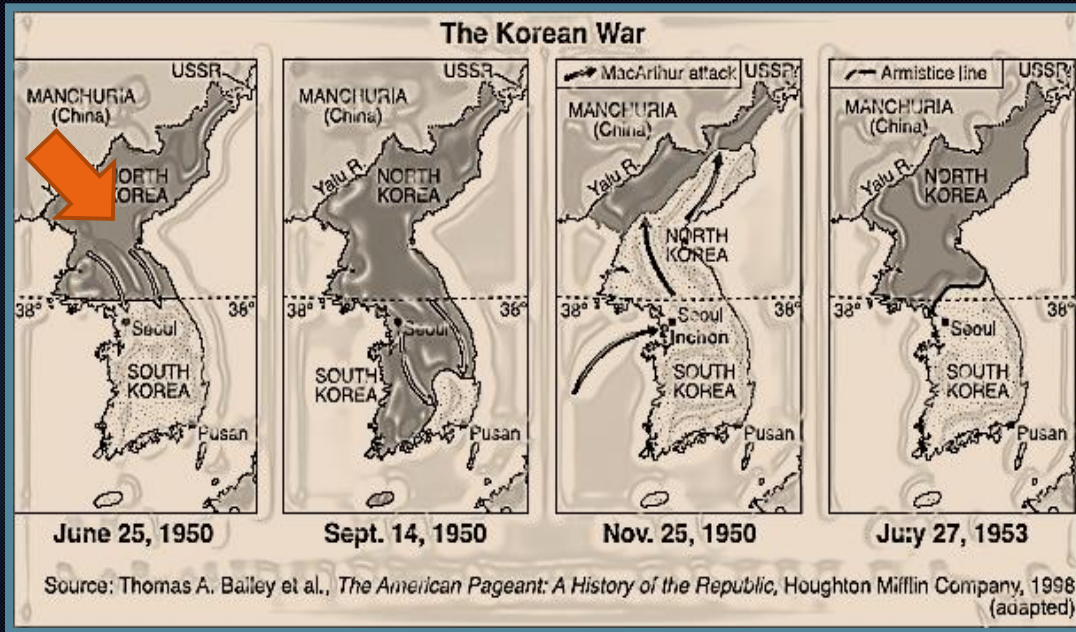
MILITARY to CIVILIAN

Mental Health Disorders Veterans *and* Families



- ▶ Almost all combat veterans have some sort of mental challenges.
- ▶ About 20% develop a diagnosable mental disorder shortly after deployment.
- ▶ 2/3 of those who screen positive do NOT seek help
 - ▶ Cultural bias – civilian or military
 - ▶ Seems normal or understandable for circumstances
 - ▶ Thought to be transient
 - ▶ Do not want it on record
 - ▶ Believe others won't understand
 - ▶ Denial – “I just want to move on with my life.”

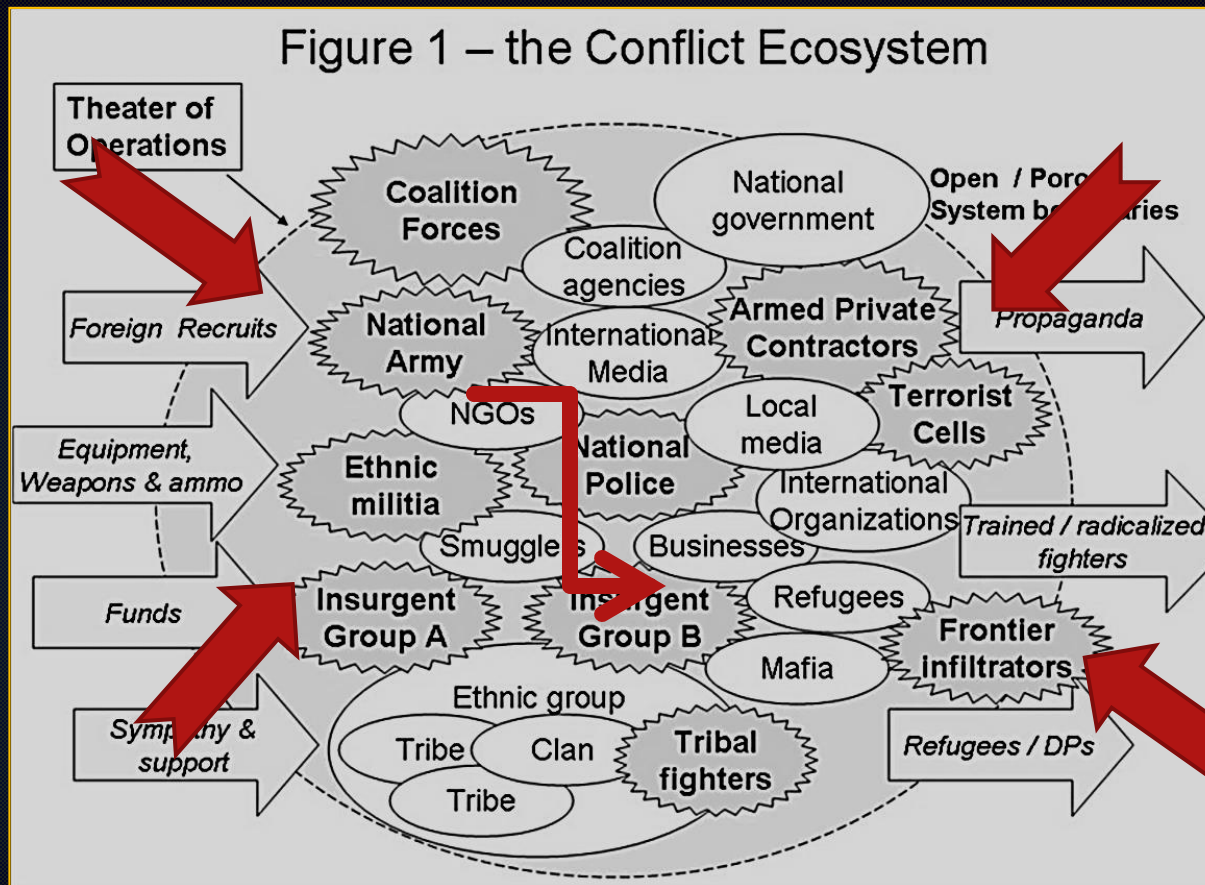
TRADITIONAL WARFARE



“Bad Hombres”

Counter-insurgency

Complexity of Modern Warfare



- ▶ KILL - Dehumanize
- ▶ PROTECT - Humanize
- ▶ CAUTION
- ▶ KILL - Dehumanize
- ▶ PROTECT - Humanize
- ▶ CAUTION
- ▶ KILL - Dehumanize
- ▶ PROTECT - Humanize
- ▶ CAUTION
- ▶ KILL - Dehumanize
- ▶ PROTECT - Humanize
- ▶ CAUTION



Post-traumatic Stress

▶ Symptoms may include:

- ▶ Panic attacks
- ▶ Hypervigilance and startle
- ▶ Aggression and paranoia
- ▶ Intrusive thoughts - “flashbacks”
- ▶ Depressed or flat affect
- ▶ Sleep disturbance and nightmares
- ▶ Sexual dysfunction (up to 80% combat vets with PTSD)

▶ May take many forms including:

- ✓ Depression
- ✓ Anxiety
- ✓ Substance abuse



Post-traumatic Stress

▶ Risk factors for PTSD associated with Major Depression:

- ▶ Enlisted personnel > Officers
- ▶ Older > Younger
- ▶ Female > Male
- ▶ National Guard
- ▶ Injured or exposed to combat
- ▶ *Also present in support personnel*

▶ PTSD associated with TBI

- ▶ Symptoms similar
- ▶ Study numbers are corrupted (TBI combat vs. non-combat)



PTSD: Late Onset Stress Symptoms (LOSS)

- ▶ Occurs months and sometimes many years after stressor.
- ▶ Often symptoms were previously present.
- ▶ Unexpected - self and others.
- ▶ Lack of sympathy - self and others.
- ▶ Presenting Sxs may be somatic .
- ▶ More difficult to diagnose.

- ▶ Aging veterans especially vulnerable.
 - ▶ Time for reflection.
 - ▶ Adverse life-events.
 - ▶ Increased vulnerability: Physical, Psychological, Financial



Seventy percent of veterans who commit suicide are 50 years of age or older.

Vietnam Veterans: One-third of veteran population





HOMECOMING

- The public did not distinguish between an unpopular war and the warriors who fought it.
- Soldiers did not “decompress” after return home.

HELL N
HELL
DO
E

I DON'T GIVE A DAMN
FOR UNCLE SAM
WE AIN'T GOING

Welcome Home Soldier !



1941
DES



Moral Injury

“Damned if they kill.....
Damned if they don't”



Stress Experienced by Medical Personnel



- ▶ Am I competent?
- ▶ Am I doing “the right thing”?
- ▶ Conflicting responsibilities – Patient vs mission.
- ▶ Dying patients – Bonding and anonymity.

Stress Experienced by Medical Personnel



Excerpts from *Intrusive Thoughts*
Pauline Hebert
Nurse, 12th Evacuation Hospital
Cu Chi, 1966

Fast as I pump that suction pump
He bleeds faster
Hemorrhages
Suffocates
Drowns in his own blood.

Aware that I am his savior
His eyes never leave my face.

I'll never know
Whether he would have rather
died that day...

We never asked.

Stress Experienced by Medical Personnel



Excerpts from
The Last Breath

Kerry "Doc" Pardue
Medic, 9th Infantry Division
Vietnam, 1968

I will do my best to keep you
out of pain ...
It is my job to help you on
your final journey.

I didn't even know your name
All I have is the memory of
your last breath.

Stress Experienced by Medical Personnel

The red cross wasn't bullet-proof,

You, your patients

Could wind up dead, all of them

Your responsibility

To save, to keep safe.

There was never time

To save them all,

There was never time

To take cover,

There was never time

To listen

There was never silence.

From Pauline Hebert's "Luck"



Identification of Civilian Patients Who Are Veterans

Professionalism

Necessary for good patient care.

Responsibility

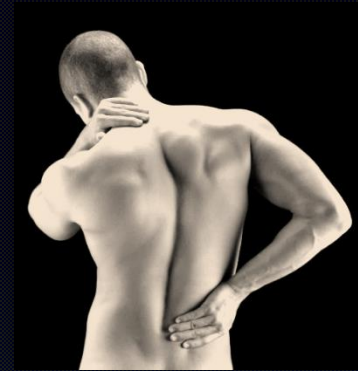
Repay these individuals for their service.

“Did you or someone close to you ever serve in the military?”

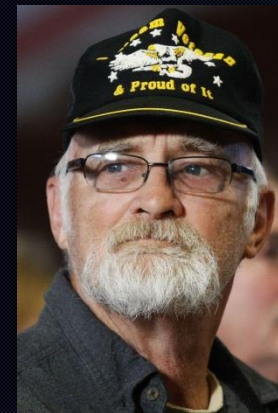
NOT: *“Are you a veteran?”*

Most Common Veterans' Complaints

- ▶ Musculoskeletal symptoms.
- ▶ Other chronic pain.
- ▶ Psychiatric
 - ▶ May present with somatic complaints.
- ▶ May be specific to past deployments or job description:
 - ▶ Agent Orange Exposure.
 - ▶ Gulf War Syndrome.
 - ▶ Traumatic brain injury.
 - ▶ Infectious diseases.



Some Veterans Look Like Veterans



But most military veterans
look like your other patients !

***Do not make
assumptions.***



This doctor has no clue which of his patients served in the military.

He was never taught to ask !



Is this mother a veteran?

Her medical team doesn't know.

They don't ask every patient,
"Have you ever served in the military?"



She may have served in Iraq.

Gulf War Syndrome was never considered as a possible cause of her abdominal pain, fatigue, myalgia, and headaches.

Did these young patients serve in combat?

Their caregivers don't know.

They don't ask every patient,
"Have you ever served in the military?"

They may have served in Afghanistan.

Their symptoms of anxiety, depression and poor concentration might be caused by PTSD or TBI.

They did not tell anyone they served and no one asked.



If these pregnant women are veterans

Their caregivers don't know.

Unless they ask every pregnant patient,
“Did you or the baby's father ever serve in the
military?”

*They have the same risks as male veterans and
they more likely to be victims of sexual abuse,
or have complications of pregnancy or
offspring with birth defects because of toxic
exposures.*



Are these families ex-military?

Their clinicians don't know

Unless they ask every family,
“Did either parent serve in the military?”

Parents and children may require counseling for serious psycho-social problems when parents serve in combat or complete long tours of military duty.



Military Health History: Basics



- ▶ *Did you or did someone close to you ever serve in the military?*
- ▶ **If NO:** The history is completed.

Reminder:

A civilian patient's prior military service can affect *ALL* of the following



- ▶ Past medical history
- ▶ Present medical history
- ▶ Occupational history
- ▶ Psychiatric history
- ▶ Social and family history
- ▶ Preventive screening and anticipatory guidance

Military Health History: Basics



▶ Stress confidentiality

▶ Sensitivity

- ▶ Everyone has good and bad experiences in the military. Which were best and worst for you?
- ▶ How do you think they affected you? Your family?
- ▶ Do you want to talk about any of them in detail?
- ▶ Were you exposed to killed or wounded individuals? Effects on you personally?
- ▶ Please excuse me if I don't use proper terminology.

▶ Do Nots

- ▶ Did you ever kill anybody?

Military Health History: Basics

▶ Occupational History

- ▶ Physical injury
- ▶ Exposures
- ▶ Infections
- ▶ Psychological Injury
- ▶ Not only from combat



▶ Social History

- ▶ Home and Family
- ▶ Work
- ▶ Recreation and Risk-taking

VA OAA Pocket Card

http://www.va.gov/oaa/pocket_cards.asp

Ask these questions of military service members and all Veterans

General Questions

- Tell me about your military experience.
- When and where do you/did you serve?
- What do you/did you do while in the service?
- How has military service affected you?

If your patient answers "Yes" to any of the following questions, ask:

"Can you tell me more about that?"

- Did you see combat, enemy fire, or casualties?
- Were you or a buddy wounded, injured, or hospitalized?
- Did you ever become ill while you were in the service?
- Were you a prisoner of war?

Compensation & Benefits

- Do you have a service-connected condition?
- Would you like assistance in filing for compensation for injuries/illnesses related to your service?

Call VBA at 1-800-827-1000

Sexual Harassment, Assault, and Trauma

- Have you ever experienced physical, emotional, or sexual harassment or trauma?
- Is this past experience causing you problems now?
- Do you want a referral?

Exposure Concerns

What... were you exposed to?

Chemical (pollution, solvents, etc.)

Biological (infectious disease)

Physical (radiation, heat, vibration, noise, etc.)

precautions were taken? (Avoidance, PPE, Treatment)

How... long was the exposure?

concerned are you about the exposure?

Where... were you exposed?

When... were you exposed?

Who... else may have been affected? Unit name, etc.

Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Infection

- Have you ever had a blood transfusion?
- Have you ever injected drugs such as heroin or cocaine?

Living Situation

- Where do you live? • Is your housing safe?
- Are you in any danger of losing your housing?
- Do you need assistance in caring for dependents?

Stress Reactions/Adjustment Problems

In your life, have you ever had an experience so horrible, frightening, or upsetting that, in the past month you...

- Have had nightmares about it or thought about it when you did not want to?
- Tried hard not to think about it or went out of your way to avoid situations that reminded you of it?
- Were constantly on guard, watchful, or easily startled?
- Felt numb or detached from others, activities, or your surroundings?

American Academy of Nursing

<http://www.haveyoueverserved.com/pocket-card--posters.htm>



Print your own cards

**MILITARY HEALTH HISTORY/
POCKET CARD FOR CLINICIANS**

HAVE YOU EVER SERVED?

www.HAVEYOUEVERSERVED.COM

Have you or has someone close to you ever served in the military?

- When did you serve?
- Which branch?
- What did you do while you were in the military?
- Were you assigned to a hostile or combative area?
- Did you experience enemy fire, see combat, or witness casualties?
- Were you wounded, injured, or hospitalized?
- Did you participate in any experimental projects or tests?
- Were you exposed to noise, chemicals, gases, demolition of munitions, pesticides, or other hazardous substances?

Have you ever used the VA for health care?

- When was your last visit to the VA?
- Do you have a service-connected disability or condition?
- Do you have a VA primary care provider?

 American Academy of Nursing

CLINICIAN POCKET CARD

Carry the reference
pocket card with you.

CONTACT US TO USE IN
YOUR HOSPITAL OR CLINIC

OFFER FOR STATE VA
DIRECTORS

HAVE YOU EVER SERVED?

Tell your nurses if you or a family member
have ever served in the military.
They need to know to serve you better.

Learn why it's important at
www.HAVEYOUEVERSERVED.COM

POSTER

Post this up in your waiting rooms or
most visible areas.

- Tabloid size (PDF)

HAVE YOU EVER SERVED?

Tell your healthcare provider.

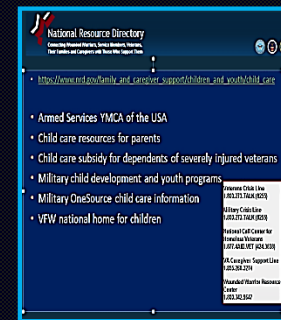
www.HAVEYOUEVERSERVED.COM

PATIENT REMINDER CARD

Give this card to your patients to
remind them about their
VA benefits and resources.

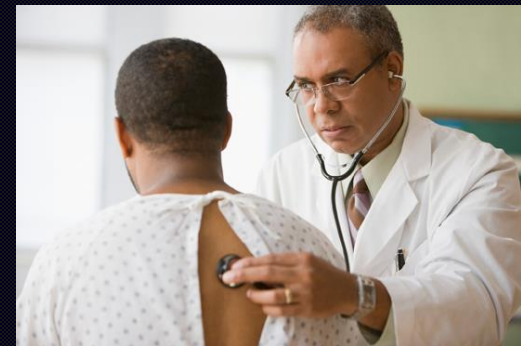
Resources for Veterans and Professionals

- ✓ va.gov websites
- ✓ Your state's department of veterans affairs.
- ▶ Veterans' support and access groups. (Access through search engines, Wikipedia, etc.)
- ▶ National Resource Directory. (nrd.gov)
- ▶ Commercial websites. (military.com)



Expanded Role for Community Medical Providers

- Expected downsizing of active duty military will create a larger veteran population.
- Increased out-sourcing?
- The Affordable Care Act meant that more veterans will have comprehensive health insurance through employers and may not use their VA benefits. Future status ???




Government Assistance for Vets

TRICARE: Is Affordable Care Act compliant.

CHAMPVA: For dependents of 100 percent disabled.

A&A (Veterans Pension): Aid and Assistance Low
Income Vets: Housebound, Assisted Living,
Nursing Home



Recommend that veterans navigate the system with help from a state VA representative or a specialized veterans' advocate group !!

They should **NOT** try to go it alone.

Questions
Comments
Suggestions ??



Additional info:
www.JLBMD.com

Please fill out evaluation forms
before exiting the room.