



Great Lakes VA HEALTHVIEWS

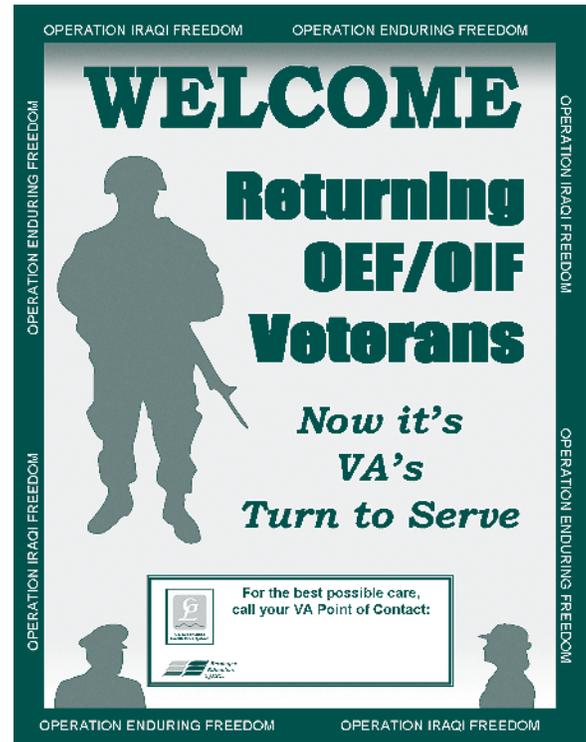
The Newsletter about Health for Veterans in VISN 12



Volume 4, Issue 1

Spring 2006

ARE YOU A VETERAN OF OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM OR OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM?



If you are a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) or Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), or know someone who is, we want you to know that the VA is here to help you. Care is available to you when you return home.

The VA will provide treatment for injuries or illnesses a veteran believes are related to having served in combat. Treatment may be available for up to two years. The VA will also provide one dental visit within 90 days of discharge.

Problems after discharge from active duty may include:

- Readjustment issues
- Acute stress reactions
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Depression
- Combat related wounds (including amputees)
- Alcohol and/or drug dependence
- Non-dependent use of alcohol and/or drugs

(continued on page 2)

Female veterans may suffer from additional trauma related to:

- Sexual abuse
- Sexual harassment
- Sexual assaults or rape
- Other mental disorders

The VA has learned from experience that about half the soldiers who serve in combat zones develop PTSD. Often, the returning veteran minimizes problems, wanting to return to

“normal life” right away. If you develop problems after you are home for a while, don’t forget that the VA can help.

As of now, roughly 15% of OIF/OEF veterans have come to VA with mental health needs or problems. Every VA hospital has a contact person for veterans of OIF/OEF. Contact yours today!

Sue Kuruzovich, MSSW/LCSW
Tomah VA Medical Center

Your Local OIF/OEF Contacts

Hines

- Ivy Bryant, MSW
708-202-2076
- Ruth Baker, MSW
708-202-2080

Jesse Brown

- Ken Khauns, MD
312-469-4044
- Michal Konkoly, MSW
312-569-7549

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- Susanne Mills, RN
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- Andrea Collins, MSN/RN
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Madison

- Robert Kelter, MSW
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- Jone Pedersen, Chief of
Patient Administration
608-280-7078
- John Hofer, DMD
608-280-7035

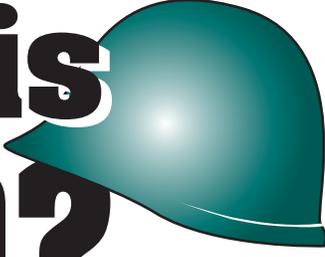
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- Jean Bromley, MSW
414-384-2000 ext. 41826
- Helen Bolgrien, Division
Manager for Medical
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414-384-2000 ext. 42139

Tomah

- Jeanne Button, CADC III
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- Bob Karpinsky, MSW
608-372-3971 ext. 66024

What is PTSD?



People in the military have experienced Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) since war began. It has been called “battle fatigue,” “shell shock” and now “PTSD.”

It is estimated that 11% of soldiers returning from Afghanistan and 18% of soldiers returning from Iraq will be at risk for PTSD. The percentages are much higher for military personnel who are exposed to sustained combat.

But PTSD is not seen just in the military. PTSD can occur any time a person witnesses a terrifying, horrifying, or intensely fearful event. It is important to know that PTSD is caused by an actual change in the brain chemistry after a person witnesses a traumatic event. This change then shows up as emotional and psychological changes in the person.

The Symptoms of PTSD are:

- An unwanted re-experience of the traumatic event through nightmares.
- Flashbacks (intense conscious images of the actual event) or other persistent thoughts of the event.
- A deliberate avoidance of anything to do with the trauma (a wish to avoid discussing the trauma with others, even with those who have lived through a similar situation).
- Emotional detachment (lengthy periods of self isolation, feeling emotionally detached from others, even those who are closest to you).
- Lack of interest in activities that were once enjoyed.
- Frequent episodes of excessive anxiety, feeling on edge, irritability, and being startled easily.

The Effects of PTSD

People with PTSD have a hard time relating to others. They are seen as “hard to get along with.” They are often irritable, moody and may have intense bouts of anger. They may also have a hard time concentrating. This can lead to much job-related stress. Many people with PTSD are no longer motivated to meet with people and have fun. Those who know them may say things like, “They’re not like they used to be” or “They have really changed.”

A person with PTSD is more likely to have:

- Headaches
- GI upset
- Skin problems
- High blood pressure

Treatment of PTSD

VA medical centers work to identify those who are at risk for PTSD. Most veterans with PTSD are referred to Mental Health. They meet with a psychiatrist, psychologist, and social worker. Treatment may include medicine, one-on-one counseling, or group counseling. The veteran may be seen in the outpatient clinics or, if necessary, admitted to the inpatient residential program. Treatment is tailor-made for the veteran.

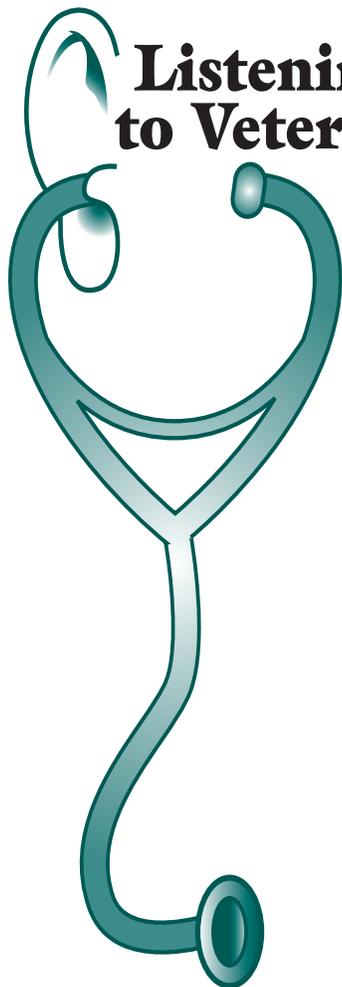
A psychotherapist will educate the veteran about the physical and emotional effects of PTSD. When the veteran is able, he/she is asked to tell about the trauma in detail. This can be very difficult work for the veteran to do. People who do not talk about the trauma usually do not cope well in life. In contrast, people who face the trauma tend to reduce their symptoms of PTSD.

Veterans are also invited to attend groups with peers who are also coping with PTSD. Their spouses, partners, and other family members may also participate in the treatment.

Very few individuals are “cured” of PTSD. But the good news is that most who undergo treatment tend to cope better and more fully enjoy life.

Dr. Michael Brandt
Psychologist
Tomah VA Medical Center





Advanced Clinic Access

...How does it work for me?

The VA strives to give our veterans coordinated health care. That means your care is managed for you, with you, and when you need it. We call this “Advanced Clinic Access.” We know you receive better care when you have one provider to deliver and coordinate your care.

How will this benefit you?

- ✓ Your health care team will know you, your needs, and your medical history.
- ✓ You will have better follow-up care.
- ✓ Your health care provider will be more accountable to you.

Answered by: _____

Deborah J. Thiel,
R.D., M.P.H.
Primary Care Service
Line Manager
Tomah VA Medical
Center

If you are a veteran who receives Primary Care at more than one VA, you need to make a choice. You can have a Primary Care Provider at only one facility. If you need specialty care, hospitalization, or health care while you are traveling, you will still be able to go to any other VA.

We want each veteran to get the care they need. You can help us do this by:

1. Having only one Primary Care provider and telling us when you have seen another provider.
2. Giving any temporary phone numbers and addresses to your primary health care team.

3. Calling us:

- ✓ To schedule an appointment with your provider.
- ✓ If you need to cancel or change your appointment time.
- ✓ To ask questions about any medical concerns.

4. Reporting 30 minutes early for your scheduled appointment.

5. Bringing in all your medicines and non-VA medical information when you come to an appointment.

6. Telling us what works and what needs improvement.

Each one of us needs to do our part so that all veterans get the access they need to health care at the VA.

Help a Fellow Vet!



**If you cannot make your appointment,
call to cancel ahead of time, so another
veteran can be seen!**

HOME CARE CORNER

MOVE!

To Health and Wellness

Did you know that being overweight now equals smoking as the leading cause of veteran health problems? The VA has developed a national weight management program called MOVE! (Management of Obese/Overweight Veterans Everywhere).

The MOVE! Program can help you...

- Lose Weight
- Keep it off
- Improve your health

The MOVE! Program features...

- Emphasis on health and wellness through nutrition and physical activity changes.
- A focus on lifestyle.
- Individual tailoring to meet your needs.
- Follow-up and support to keep you going.

The MOVE! Program can help you lower your risk for...

- Diabetes
- High Blood Pressure
- Heart Disease
- Sleep Apnea

The MOVE Program will soon be coming to a VA near you. Talk to your Primary Care Provider about joining!

For more information, visit: www.move.med.va.gov

Kelly Christen, RD
MOVE! Coordinator
Tomah VA Medical Center

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Important note: We are not able to **mail** this newsletter to you. It can be found in waiting rooms of your VA Medical Center and outpatient clinics.

You can also subscribe to the electronic version of this newsletter through the VISN 12 internet site at <http://www.visn12.med.va.gov>
Click on the *Services for Veterans* button, then click on the *Veterans' Wellness* section.



Your best source for information about your health will always be your health care team. We hope this newsletter will encourage you to ask questions about your health concerns.

Phone Numbers for VISN 12 Hospitals

Hines: 708-202-8387
Iron Mountain: 906-774-3300
Madison: 608-256-1901
Milwaukee: 1-888-469-6614
North Chicago: 1-800-393-0865
Tomah: 1-800-872-8662
Jesse Brown: 312-569-8387

**“Ask An Expert” Question
or Idea for Future Articles**

Do you have an “Ask An Expert” question or an idea for a future article? Your ideas can be e-mailed or mailed to the Senior Editor.

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VISN 12 VA Healthcare facilities are accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). JCAHO evaluates healthcare facilities on quality, safety of patient care and safety of the environment.

If you have any concerns about patient care or safety in your facility, first contact the person in charge. If your concern cannot be resolved, the VA encourages you to contact JCAHO. You may request a “public information interview.” Requests can be made to:

Division of Accreditation Operations
Office of Quality Monitoring
Joint Commission on Accreditation of
Healthcare Organizations
One Renaissance Boulevard
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181
1-800-994-6610