

VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System

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The VA and the OEF/OIF/OND Combat Veteran
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Mission

- ▶ The philosophy of the Pittsburgh VA Medical Center, with respect to our veterans who have served in the combat theaters of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, is to offer active and immediate assessment, diagnosis and treatment and to provide a continuum of care upon separation from active duty. The job we are committed to is offering quality medical and behavioral health services to our returning combat veterans.

Combat Vet Eligibility Criteria

- ▶ Service members and veterans, including Activated Reservists and National Guard members discharged under other than dishonorable conditions are eligible for Five Years of free care if they served on active duty in a theater of combat operations during a period of war, after the Gulf War or in combat against a hostile force during a period of “hostilities” after November 11, 1998.
- ▶ The 5-year eligibility period begins on the separation date of service of the service member from active duty military service. Veterans who qualify under this special eligibility are not subject to co-pay requirements for conditions potentially related to their combat service.

OEF/OIF/OND Program

- ▶ The OEF/OIF/OND program is a unique program designed by Veteran's Administration to meet the specific needs of veteran's returning from Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn.
- ▶ Purpose is to provide seamless, quality health care services and benefits to our returning OEF/OIF/OND veterans who are injured or wounded from combat or military operations as they transition back to civilian life with their loved ones and friends.

Women Veteran Programs

- ▶ Women Veterans may receive:
 - full continuum of medical benefits package
 - women's family planning and birth control, gender-specific health care, e.g. hormone replacement therapy, breast and GYN care.
 - Special considerations
 - Each facility has a Women Veterans Program Manager and a Military Sexual Trauma (MST) Coordinator
 - Women's Benefits Coordinator available for disability benefits

Dental Care

- **Cost free one-time treatment** of dental conditions for recently separated veterans who
 - Served for 90 days or more,
 - Apply within 180 days of separation, and
 - DD Form 214 does not indicate necessary dental care was provided within 90 days of release or discharge


OEF/OIF Program Duties

- ▶ Duties include assessment, outreach, referrals, counseling, problem-solving, coordinate service delivery, and helping veterans navigate through the VA Healthcare System.
- ▶ Coordinate referrals from MTF's (Walter Reed, Bethesda Naval, Camp Pendleton).
- ▶ VAMC Pittsburgh is the central facility for eleven in three states (PA, WV, OH).

Services Available at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System

- ▶ Primary Care
- ▶ Hospital Inpatient Care
- ▶ Compensation and Pension (VBA referrals)
- ▶ Readjustment & Sexual Trauma Counseling
- ▶ Mental Health
- ▶ Dental Services
- ▶ Case Management
- ▶ Emergency Care
- ▶ Physical Therapy
- ▶ Occupational Therapy

Services available at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System

- ▶ Infectious Disease
 - ▶ Prosthetics
 - ▶ Social Work Services
 - ▶ Women's Health
 - ▶ Pharmacy
 - ▶ Substance Abuse Treatment
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Social Work Services

- ▶ Health Care for Homeless Veterans- (HCHV)
- ▶ Housing and Urban Development- Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH)
- ▶ Caregiver Support Program

The Big Disconnect #1



“We Are Family”

- ▶ Assuming each soldier has 7 close family members (spouse, children, parents, fiancées, siblings), 11.5 million people are directly impacted by OEF, OIF, and OND.
- ▶ Utilizing concept of 6 degrees of separation including another 6 people (grandparents, grandchildren, uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, cousins, close friends and colleagues) at least 70 million people are directly impacted by OEF, OIF, and OND.
- ▶ Family is much broader than having a spouse and children.

A Soldier's Perspective

- ▶ “There is disconnection between everything human and what has to be done in combat. Imagine being in an unimaginable situation and having to do the unthinkable. How can this be done? A detachment between everything human and having to do the inconceivable resounds in combat.”

What makes OEF/OIF unique?

- ▶ Constant hyper-vigilance is the norm
- ▶ Very few truly 'safe' zones
- ▶ No front line
- ▶ Urban settings
- ▶ Repeated and extended tours
- ▶ Reliance on and involvement of reserve units
- ▶ Multiple family members may be involved
- ▶ Women are integrated (15% women; 43% report rape or physical assault)

Psychological Threats

- First sustained ground combat undertaken by the U.S. since Vietnam.
- More OIF troops have seen heavy combat than in recent wars.
- 90% of OIF veterans have been exposed to a firefight.
- 94% have seen dead bodies or human remains.

Source: NEJM, Volume 351: 13-22 July 1, 2004 Number 1



Psychological/Emotional

- ▶ Poor Conditions (hot weather, constant sweating, etc...)
- ▶ Witnessing Innocent Civilian Deaths
- ▶ Loss of Fellow Soldier
- ▶ Firefights
- ▶ Mortar Shelling
- ▶ Sleepless Nights, infidelity of spouse, etc.

Spiritual Impact of Combat

- ▶ Lack of meaning and/or purpose in life
- ▶ Hopelessness in personal efforts to return to God (Higher Power, family, and self)
- ▶ Difficulty in controlling emotions, passions, behavior
- ▶ Rage
- ▶ Fear
- ▶ Revenge against members of cultures/nationalities of the *enemy*
- ▶ Distrust of government systems and political principals

Spiritual Impacts (continued)

- ▶ Grief over the loss of innocence, morality, faith, values, beliefs, commitments, and the loss of fellow combat veterans and friends.
- ▶ Survivor's Guilt
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Dysfunctional relationships in marriage, family, employment, and with systems such as communities of faith and government agencies.
- ▶ Battered self-esteem, self-worth that discounts positive feelings of duty, honor, sacrifice, and bravery.

Blast Injuries- Consequences

- ▶ Brain Injury
 - ▶ Amputation
 - ▶ Fractures
 - ▶ Wounds
 - ▶ Psychological-PTSD
 - ▶ Crush Injuries
 - ▶ Burns
 - ▶ Auditory/Vestibular
 - ▶ Eye, Orbit, Face
 - ▶ Dental
- 

Blast Injuries (continued)

- ▶ Renal
- ▶ Respiratory
- ▶ Cardiac and Vascular
- ▶ Gastrointestinal
- ▶ Pain
- ▶ Peripheral Nerve

The
Big
Disconnect
#2




OEF/OIF – THE NUMBERS


- Combined Fatality Totals for OEF/OIF/OND?
- Total Pennsylvania fatalities?
- Total Pennsylvania wounded?
- Total injured overall for OEF/OIF/OND?
- Total Female Fatalities?
- Total IED Fatalities?
- Total number of suicide bombings?

❖ As of September 1, 2011

US Troop Casualties

- 6607 US troops (Iraq & Afghanistan & OND)
 - 98% male
 - 91% enlisted
 - 82% active duty
 - 11% National Guard
 - 74% Caucasian
 - 11% Latino
 - 9% African American
 - 54% US casualties under 25 years of age
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US Military Bases

- ▶ Fort Hood, TX- 506
 - ▶ Camp Pendleton, CA- 345
 - ▶ Fort Campbell, KY- 224
 - ▶ Fort Carson, CO- 202
 - ▶ Fort Bragg, NC- 196
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Demographic Characteristics of OEF, OIF and OND Veterans Utilizing VA Health Care

	% OEF/OIF/OND Veterans* (n = 683,521)		% OEF/OIF/OND Veterans* (n = 683,521)
Sex		Unit Type	
Male	88.1	Active Duty	54.7
Female	11.9	Reserve/Guard	45.3
Birth Year Cohort†		Branch	
1980 – 1995	45.3	Air Force	12.3
1970 – 1979	26.3	Army	61.2
1960 – 1969	21.0	Marines	13.5
1950 – 1959	6.4	Navy	12.9
1926 – 1949	1.0	Rank	
		Enlisted	91.2
		Officer	8.8

* Percentages reported are approximate due to rounding.

† A range of birth years is now being reported rather than a range of ages to capture with greater precision the age distribution of OEF/OIF/OND Veterans utilizing VA health care. This began with the 3rd Qtr FY 2009 report.

Frequency of Mental Disorders¹ among OEF/OIF/OND Veterans since 2002²

Disease Category (ICD 290-319 code)	Total Number of OEF/OIF/OND Veterans³
PTSD (ICD-9CM 309.81)	187,133
Depressive Disorders (311)	139,119
Neurotic Disorders (300)	118,591
Affective Psychoses (296)	83,575
Alcohol Dependence Syndrome (303)	38,749
Nondependent Abuse of Drugs (ICD 305)	26,636
Specific Nonpsychotic Mental Disorder due to Organic Brain Damage (310)	24,033
Special Symptoms, Not Elsewhere Classified (307)	23,276
Drug Dependence (304)	19,711
Sexual Deviations and Disorders (302)	19,620

¹ Includes both provisional and confirmed diagnoses.

² These are cumulative data since FY 2002. ICD diagnoses used in these analyses are obtained from computerized administrative data. Although diagnoses are made by trained health care providers, up to one-third of coded diagnoses may not be confirmed when initially coded because the diagnosis is provisional, pending further evaluation.

³ A total of 349,786 unique patients received a diagnosis of a possible mental disorder. A Veteran may have more than one mental disorder diagnosis and each diagnosis is entered separately in this table; therefore, the total number above will be higher than 349,786.

Frequency of Diagnoses* among OEF/OIF/OND Veterans

Diagnosis (Broad ICD-9 Categories)**	Frequency	Percent†
Infectious and Parasitic Diseases (001-139)	101,158	14.8
Malignant Neoplasms (140-209)	8,822	1.3
Benign Neoplasms (210-239)	41,121	6.0
Diseases of Endocrine/Nutritional/ Metabolic Systems (240-279)	207,196	30.3
Diseases of Blood and Blood Forming Organs (280-289)	23,096	3.4
Mental Disorders (290-319)	349,786	51.2
Diseases of Nervous System/ Sense Organs (320-389)	294,433	43.1
Diseases of Circulatory System (390-459)	139,318	20.4
Disease of Respiratory System (460-519)	173,560	25.4
Disease of Digestive System (520-579)	242,070	35.4
Diseases of Genitourinary System (580-629)	96,624	14.1
Diseases of Skin (680-709)	139,159	20.4
Diseases of Musculoskeletal System/Connective System (710-739)	377,205	55.2
Symptoms, Signs and Ill Defined Conditions (780-799)	341,019	49.9
Injury/Poisonings (800-999)	190,188	27.8

*Includes both provisional and confirmed diagnoses.

**These are cumulative data since FY 2002, with data on hospitalizations and outpatient visits as of March 31, 2011; Veterans can have multiple diagnoses with each health care encounter. A Veteran is counted only once in any single diagnostic category but can be counted in multiple categories, so the above numbers add up to greater than 683,521; percentages add up to greater than 100 for the same reason.

† Percentages reported are approximate due to rounding.

Updated Roster of OEF/OIF/OND Who Have Left Active Duty

- ▶ **1,318,510** OEF, OIF, and OND Veterans have left active duty and become eligible for VA health care since FY 2002
 - **712,089 (~54%)*** Former Active Duty troops
 - **606,421 (~46%)*** Reserve and National Guard

*Percentages reported are approximate due to rounding.

Cumulative from 1st Quarter FY 2002 through 2nd Quarter FY 2011

The Big Disconnect #3



VBA Benefits and Services





- **COMPENSATION**
- **EDUCATION**
- **VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION
& EMPLOYMENT**
- **LIFE INSURANCE**
- **HOME LOAN GUARANTY**



"Some of you young men think that war is all glamour and glory, but let me tell you, boys, it is all hell!"
-General William T. Sherman, 1880 speech from which we derive the phrase "War is hell"



Suggestions/Recommendations

- ▶ Recognize the stress involved with separating and returning to family.
- ▶ Acknowledge the bridge that connects physical, emotional, and psychological wounds.
- ▶ Offer information that expedites veteran receiving assistance.



QUESTIONS?