



“WRAIR Forward”

DECEMBER 2007, NO. 42

THIS ACTIVITIES REPORT IS PUBLISHED BY THE U.S. ARMY MEDICAL RESEARCH UNIT-EUROPE,
WALTER REED ARMY INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH, U.S. ARMY MEDICAL RESEARCH AND MATERIEL COMMAND

COMMANDER’S CORNER

Each year since 2003, the US Army has sent a team of mental health researchers to Iraq and/or Afghanistan to assess the mental health of service members. These Mental Health Advisory Teams (MHATs) provide recommendations to Operational Commanders, senior leaders, and policy makers regarding delivery of behavioral health services and other initiatives to improve the mental health of the deployed force. This year, MHAT V consisted of teams in Iraq (OIF) and Afghanistan (OEF). SSG Abrahamson, SPC Terry and I (all from USAMRU-E) and team leader LTC McBride, from the Division of Psychiatry and Neurosciences at the WRAIR, comprised the MHAT V OEF team, and I want to recognize SSG Abrahamson and SPC Terry for doing a fantastic job in Afghanistan. In addition, while three of us from USAMRU-E deployed, the entire unit was essential to the success of the mission. Based on MHAT V OEF findings and recommendations, the delivery of behavioral health care throughout Afghanistan has already been modified to ensure that service members’ mental health needs are being met as far forward as possible. I also want to express my gratitude to the Soldiers in Afghanistan for putting their lives on the line and for the sacrifices they and their families are making.

-MAJ Dennis McGurk

CONGRESSIONAL STAFFER BRIEFED

CPT Cabrera and Dr. Wright briefed STAFFDEL DiResta, Senate Appropriations Committee, Defense Subcommittee, on the USAMRU-E research program (Heidelberg; 13 DEC 07).

NEW PUBLICATIONS

TIMING AND POST-DEPLOYMENT PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Bliese, P.D., Wright, K.M., Adler, A.B., Thomas, J.L., & Hoge, C.W. (2007). Timing of post-combat mental health assessments. *Psychological Services*, 4, 141-148.

MULTILEVEL STATISTICAL ACHIEVEMENTS

Bliese, P. D., Chan, D., & Ployhart, R. E. (2007). Multilevel methods: Future directions in measurement, longitudinal analyses, and nonnormal outcomes. *Organizational Research Methods*, 4, 551-563.



USAMRU-E TEAM IN AFGHANISTAN

The fifth Mental Health Advisory Team (MHAT V) deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan to assess the mental health and well-being of troops. This annual assessment was requested by the Command Surgeon of Combined Joint Task Force 82 (CJTF-82) in order to address issues related to sustaining Soldier mental health.

The MHAT V team deployed to Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan included LTC McBride (Team Leader), Division of Psychiatry and Neuroscience, WRAIR, and MAJ McGurk (co-leader), SSG Abrahamson, and SPC Terry from USAMRU-E (see photo below). MAJ McGurk deployed to the area of operations 13 OCT-30 NOV 07 and the rest of the USAMRU-E deployed 13-23 Nov 07. Prior to deploying, the team spent a week at the Combined Readiness Center at Ft Benning (7-12 OCT 07).



Soldiers completing MHAT V survey in Afghanistan

Consistent with previous MHATs, the team surveyed Soldiers in theater, and interviewed Soldiers, leaders, and behavioral health professionals (WRAIR protocol #1026). The OEF leadership was then briefed on study results in theater. Afterwards, MAJ McGurk worked on the report with the OIF MHAT V team at the WRAIR (10-14 DEC 07) and was part of the team that briefed MG Weightman, CG, MRMC (18 DEC 07).

Training in technical survey processing began months prior and was developed and conducted by USAMRU-E research assistant Ms. Salvi.



OEF MHAT V from left to right SPC Terry, LTC McBride. MAJ McGurk. SSG Abrahamson



INTERNATIONAL MILITARY TESTING ASSOCIATION HIGHLIGHTS WRAIR RESEARCH

The IMTA conference held at the Gold Coast, Australia, (8-12 OCT 07), included several WRAIR presentations. In addition, COL Castro and Dr. Adler met with international counterparts regarding TTCP and NATO cooperative projects.

Battlemind Forum (chaired by Dr. Adler):

- Adler, A.B., & Castro, C.A. Battlemind Training System: Mental Health Training Across the Deployment Cycle.
- Castro, C.A., & Adler, A.B. Battlemind Training for 3-6 Months Post-Deployment: Demonstration.

Assessing the Psychological Effects of Operational Deployments Symposium

- Bliese, P.D., Wright, K.M., Adler, A.B., Cabrera, O., Castro, C.A., & Hoge, C.W. Measuring PTSD using the PCL.
- Adler, A.B., Castro, C.A., Bliese, P.D., & McGurk, D. The Transition Scale: A measure of post-deployment adaptation.

MHAT Symposium (chaired by COL Castro)

- Castro, C.A., & McGurk, D. Findings from the Mental Health Advisory Team (MHAT) IV.

NATO MEETING ON SUICIDE



Dr. Wright attended the NATO Advanced Research Workshop entitled “Wounds of War: Lowering Suicide Risk in Returning Troops” from 14-17 OCT 07 (Klopeiner See, Austria).

- Castro, C.A., McGurk, D., & Wright, K.M. (2007, October). *A Review of the U.S. Army Suicides in Iraq*.

BATTLEMIND TRAINING SYSTEM UPDATE

- An overview of Battlemind First Aid Training was provided in support of Warrior Transition Unit staff training at the request of the Europe Regional Medical Command (Dr. Adler, with support from COL Milliken & MAJ McGurk, Heidelberg, 17 OCT 07).
- The Battlemind Training program was presented to the Stuttgart Military Community at the request of Army Community Services. The talk, “Battlemind Training System: Advances in Mental Health Support for Soldiers and Families Across the Deployment Cycle”, was presented by Dr. Adler with the support of CPT Cabrera (27 NOV 07).

RESEARCHING ENHANCED BATTLEMIND

- Dr. Adler and Ms. Salvi met with LTC Duecker, Commander, Schweinfurt Clinic, Mr. Thompson, Care Manager, and CPT Cahill, 2BCT Surgeon, to plan for a 2008 study assessing the efficacy of enhanced post-deployment Battlemind Training (Schweinfurt, 8 NOV 07).
- Dr. Adler and Dr. Wright met with COL Hoge to continue work on developing Advanced Battlemind training materials and to update the research program (Silver Spring, MD, 13 & 14 NOV 07).

WRAIR PRESENTS RESULTS ON COMBAT-RELATED TRAUMATIC STRESS

COL Hoge, Director, Division of Psychiatry and Neurosciences, WRAIR, chaired the symposium “Assessment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder among Soldiers Returning from Combat Duty in Iraq” at the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies conference held in Baltimore, MD (15-17 NOV 07). Dr. Adler presented two of the papers:



- Bliese, P.D., Wright, K.M., Adler, A.B., & Hoge, C.W. (2007, November). Validating the PCL and 4 Item PTSD Screen to Assess Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Among Soldiers Returning from Combat.
- Adler, A.B., Wright, K.M., Bliese, P.D., Eckford, R., & Hoge, C.W. (2007, November). A2 Diagnostic Criterion for Combat-related Posttraumatic Stress Disorder.

PILOTING NATO LECTURE SERIES

A new NATO lecture series (LS 167), entitled “Leadership and Psychological Support Across the Deployment Cycle”, is being prepared by a sub-group of NATO HFM 081/RTG. LS 167 is designed to complement the Task Group’s NATO publication “A Leader’s Guide to Operational Stress across the Deployment Cycle” (available on USAMRU-E website).

As a member of the LS 167 sub-committee, Dr. Adler continued working with NATO colleagues to prepare briefing materials and training activities (Madrid, 5-7 NOV 07). The full day training was then piloted at the Instituut Defensie Leergangen [the Netherlands Defence College] in Rijswijk (11-13 DEC 07).

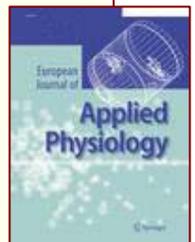
INTERNATIONAL VISITOR

Dr. Holmberg, a contractor with the Swedish Defence College, met with USAMRU-E science staff to discuss issues related to establishing an applied military research program for the Swedish Defence Force (CPT Cabrera, Dr. Wright & Dr. Adler; 20 NOV 07).

NEW PUBLICATION

INTERNATIONAL STUDY CONTRASTS PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL LOAD

Johannes, B., Wittels, P., Enne, R., Eisenger, G., Castro, C.A., Thomas, J.L., Adler, A.B., & Gerzer, R. (2007). Non-linear function model of voice pitch dependency on physical and mental load. *European Journal of Applied Physiology*, 101, 267-276.



PERSONNEL UPDATES

- SGT Williams, 68X, joined the unit from Ft Lee, VA on 7 DEC 07.
- MAJ McGurk completed the Intermediate Medical Acquisition Course 17-21 DEC 07 in Ft Detrick, MD.

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