



“WRAIR Forward”

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COMMANDER’S CORNER

In order to meet the needs of forces fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, it can be efficient for the US Army to acquire equipment using off-the shelf items rather than relying on government-funded research and development. However, when the need for comprehensive mental health training for deploying Soldiers was recognized, there was no off-the-shelf product. To meet this need, researchers from WRAIR’s Department of Military Psychiatry and USAMRU-E began developing and validating the Battlemind Training System. Since its Army-wide implementation in 2007, Battlemind has been adapted by the US Air Force as well as other nations. In effect, Battlemind has become the government’s off-the-shelf mental health training. The latest Battlemind Product is Battlemind Training during Basic Combat Training; a validation study of Basic Battlemind will be led by USAMRU-E this Spring.

-MAJ Dennis McGurk

MENTAL FITNESS STUDY PROPOSED

A new study is being proposed to assess the efficacy of mental fitness training with basic trainees. Two interventions will be adapted for basic training from existing Army programs. First, Battlemind Training will be adapted and examined in terms of its impact on mental health and coping skills. Second, the Army Center for Enhanced Performance (ACEP) will target goal setting and imagery in improving cognitive-based performance skills and performance.

A team of researchers met to plan the study proposal at Fort Detrick, Frederick, MD (15-16 SEP 08). The ACEP team included LTC Ohlson, MAJ Bredlow, Dr. Hammermeister, Dr. Harada, and Dr. Pickering. The overall study and Battlemind assessment will be led by Dr. Adler and LTC Bliese, WRAIR.

NEW PROJECT TRACKS INITIAL POST-DEPLOYMENT HEALTH TRENDS

Responding to a tasker from the Europe Regional Medical Command (ERMC), USAMRU-E has taken the lead in assessing mental health indicators in a Brigade that recently returned from 15 months in Afghanistan. Dr. Wright, the principal scientist on the project, has coordinated with BG Gallagher, Commanding General, Europe Regional Medical Command (ERMC), COL Pereira, Chief, Soldier and Family Support Services, ERMC, and leadership from the unit being studied.

As part of this command-directed assessment, surveys and focus groups are being conducted to review well-being, mental health services, and key mental health concerns during the first few months following return from combat. By measuring these mental health indicators repeatedly over time, the goal is to document the initial resetting curve and identify problems quickly in order to guide recommendations and policy. This project is unique among WRAIR’s recent surveys because standard unit health and risk indicators will be integrated into an analysis of self-report responses. In addition, this is the first project to conduct monthly assessments of well-being immediately following return from a combat deployment.



To date, data have been collected in Italy and Germany with the support of CPT Wood and CPT Edens, Department of Military Psychiatry, WRAIR, and USAMRU-E research associates Ms. Salvi, Mr. Terry, and Ms. Eckford (22-23 SEP 08).

TWO STUDIES ASSESS THE IMPACT OF POST-COMBAT EMOTIONAL WRITING

SOLDIERS COMPLETE 4-MONTH FOLLOW-UP

US Army, Europe Soldiers completed a follow-up survey as part of a Battlemind Study designed to assess the efficacy of emotional writing on the adjustment of Soldiers recently returned from 15 months in Iraq (#1171).

In this phase of the study, data were collected from 670 Soldiers, or 40% of the initial sample four months after the writing intervention (21-25 JUL 08). Data were collected in Grafenwoehr by LTC Bliese, Chair, Department of Military Psychiatry, Dr. Adler, Ms. Salvi, and Mr. Terry (USAMRU-E).

Dr. Adler and LTC Bliese briefed COL Sinclair, Commander, 172nd INF BDE (Grafenwoehr, 26 JUL 08).

COUPLES BEGIN POST-DEPLOYMENT STUDY

In a study funded by the USAMRU-E, Dr. Pennebaker, Professor, University of Texas at Austin, and his team began randomly assigning military couples to different writing conditions to determine if emotional writing facilitates post-deployment family adjustment. To date, more than 50 couples have been enrolled (#1468). LTC Bliese and Dr. Adler serve as consultants on the protocol.

OPTEMPO STUDY FINDS PERCEPTION OF WORKLOAD PREDICTS STRAIN AND STRAIN PREDICTS WORKLOAD

Tucker, J.S., Sinclair, R.R., Mohr, C.D., Adler, A.B., Thomas, J.L., & Salvi, A. D. (2008). A temporal investigation of the direct, interactive, and reverse relations between demand and control and affective strain. *Work & Stress*, 22, 81 – 95.



RUNNER-UP FOR BEST PAPER AWARD

The Society for Occupational Health Psychology selected a recent publication as a runner-up for the *Best Paper to Appear in Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* in 2006-2007:

Britt, T.W., Dickinson, J.M., Moore, D. Castro, C.A., & Adler, A.B. (2007). Correlates and consequences of morale versus depression under stressful conditions. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 12, 34-47.



PRE-DEPLOYMENT SLEEP PROBLEMS PREDICTS POST-COMBAT HEALTH

Dr. Britt, Professor, Clemson University, met with USAMRU-E researchers (Dr. Wright and Dr. Adler) to work on projects assessing the predictive value of sleep problems in post-combat adjustment.

Results from the first analyses demonstrate that Soldiers deploying to combat with sleep problems are more at risk for post-deployment adjustment problems even after controlling for pre-deployment mental health symptoms (#889; Heidelberg, 4-6 AUG 08).

TECHNICAL PANEL ESTABLISHES MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING PRINCIPLES

Technical Panel 13 (TP-13, “Psychological Health and Operational Effectiveness”), a 5-nation research group within The Technical and Cooperation Program (TTCP), met to develop consensus-based principles for military mental health training, to work on an ongoing international comparison of stigma data, and to address the development of mental health skills in basic training (Amsterdam; 26-27 SEP 08).

BI-LATERAL TALKS HIGHLIGHT PTSD

Together with COL Castro, Director, Military Operational Medicine, Dr. Adler gave an invited presentation on mental health training research in the US Army as part of the Shores Meeting, a biennial meeting of US and Israeli medical researchers (8-9 SEP 08, Baltimore).



- Castro, C.A., & Adler, A.B. (2008, September). *Reducing the Impact of Combat on Soldier Mental Health: Research Advances in Prevention and Early Intervention.*

WRAIR TEAM INSPECTS RESEARCH FILES

COL Miller, Chair, Institutional Review Board, WRAIR, Ms. Ference, Director, Human Subjects Protection, and staff member Ms. Ball inspected protocol #1171, provided an overview of new policies, and answered questions while meeting with the USAMRU-E staff (Heidelberg, 6-7 AUG 08).

PROGRESS ON BATTLEMIND FOR LEADERS

A team of Battlemind Training developers met for two days to complete two new modules: Battlemind for Leaders and Battlemind for Senior Leaders.

Team members present included COL Hoge, LTC Bliese, LTC McBride, and Mr. Keller, from the Division of Psychiatry and Neurosciences, WRAIR, Mr. Rinehart, Battlemind Training Office, Army Medical Department Center & School, & Dr. Adler, USAMRU-E. (Silver Spring, MD; 10-11 SEP 08).

FORCE HEALTH PROTECTION TALK



Dr. Adler and SFC Abrahamson attended the Army's Force Health Protection conference in Albuquerque, NM (11-15 AUG 08)

- Adler, A.B., Bliese, P.D., McGurk, D., Wright, K.M., Abrahamson, S., Pennebaker, J.W. (2008, August). Writing about the Transition from Combat to Home: Initial Analysis.

APA SYMPOSIUM HIGHLIGHTS MANAGING DEPLOYMENT MENTAL HEALTH

This year's American Psychological Association annual meeting featured a symposium chaired by Dr. Adler and COL Castro on *Managing the psychological impact of combat: Soldiers, units, and leaders* (Boston, 14-17 AUG 08).



- Castro, C.A., & McGurk, D. Impact of Multiple Deployments and Deployment Length on Mental Health: Findings from the Mental Health Advisory Team.
 - Bliese, P.D., Adler, A.B., Castro, C.A., Thomas, J.L. & Hoge, C.W. (2008, August). The Impact of Combat Experiences on Mental Health over Time.
 - Adler, A.B., Castro, C.A., & McGurk, D. (2008, August). Time-driven Battlemind Psychological Debriefing in Iraq.
 - Castro, C.A., & McGurk, D. Leadership In Extremis: Findings from the Mental Health Advisory Team.
- In addition, a paper on the importance of pre-deployment functioning was also presented:
- Wright, K.M., Cabrera, O., Bliese, P.D., & Adler, A.B. (2008, August). *Impact of predeployment functioning on mental health after combat.* (presented by LTC Bliese).

EVIDENCE FOR EMOTIONAL DISCLOSURE AND RESILIENCE PRESENTED

USAMRU-E participated in a TP-13 symposium presented at the International Military Testing Association (Amsterdam; 29 SEP - 3 OCT 08).



- Adler, A.B., Bliese, P.D., McGurk, D., Salvi, A., & Eckford, A.D. Remaining Resilient after Combat: Emotional Disclosure in US Soldiers. In C.A. Castro (chair), *Military Resiliency: Perspectives from an International Technical Panel.*

ERMC BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETS

MAJ McGurk and SFC Abrahamson participated in an all day Europe Regional Medical Command (ERMC) Board of Directors meeting (Heidelberg; 5 AUG 08).

PERSONNEL UPDATES

- CACI contractors Ms. Salvi and Ms. Eckford received awards for 5 years of service (1 AUG 08).
- Ms. Salvi, Ms. Eckford, and Mr. Terry were recognized by the Heidelberg Medical Activity for their participation in the Teen Mentoring Program (1 AUG 08).
- MAJ McGurk began the 3-month Intermediate Level Education Course in the US on 25 AUG 08.
- SFC Abrahamson, NCOIC, USAMRU-E, was promoted to his current rank on 1 SEP 08.

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