



“WRAIR Forward”

June 2009, NO. 48

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

Teamwork happens when a group of individuals work together toward a common goal. This concept is exemplified by the team assembled to conduct Battlemind Resilience Training with Basic Combat Training Soldiers as part of the Mental Fitness Study at Ft Jackson. The team of resilience trainers represent personnel from USAMRU-E, the Department of Military Psychiatry, and the Army Medical Department Center and School’s Battlemind Training Office staff. The training itself emphasizes teamwork. Along with learning mental fitness skills to develop their own psychological resilience, Soldiers at Ft Jackson are learning from Battlemind how they can achieve more as a team than when working alone and how to look after their buddies.

After 2 years as the USAMRU-E Commander, I have learned how important teamwork is in conducting behavioral health research. The MHAT VI OEF mission and the Mental Fitness Study described in this edition of the *WRAIR Forward* demonstrate how large-scale studies often require individuals from multiple commands, and sometimes even different countries, to ensure that the research being conducted sets the standard for excellence.

-MAJ Dennis McGurk

MHAT VI IN AFGHANISTAN

USAMRU-E NCOIC SFC Abrahamson deployed in support of the 2009 Mental Health Advisory Team (MHAT) VI Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan. The MHAT is a systematic assessment of the mental health and well-being of deployed Soldiers and previous MHATs have resulted in many recommendations and have led to policy changes regarding behavioral health care delivery. The MHAT VI OEF deployment team leader, LTC McBride, was also supported by WRAIR scientists MAJ Thomas and MAJ Cabrera. The team surveyed Soldiers and conducted focus groups. Results are being briefed to Army leadership.



Mental Health Advisory Team VI OEF, June 2009

MENTAL FITNESS STUDY AT BASIC TRAINING: PILOT STUDY COMPLETED

USAMRU-E, together with members of the Army Center for Enhanced Performance (ACEP), launched the Mental Fitness Study in April. The goal of the Mental Fitness Study is to assess the efficacy of two existing Army programs designed to increase mental fitness in the Basic



Combat Training context. One program, Battlemind Training, targets mental health; the other program, developed by ACEP, targets performance. Both programs adapted their training for Basic Combat Training Soldiers and were piloted with two companies at Fort Jackson, SC, from April to June.

The pilot study included 435 Soldiers from two Basic Combat Training companies. During the first week of Basic Combat Training, Soldiers in the company piloting Battlemind were provided with two hours of Battlemind or a comparison training. In the company piloting ACEP, Soldiers were provided eight hours of ACEP education or a comparison training across the 10-week cycle.

Measures include a baseline survey at reception, three follow-up surveys administered over the course of the 10-week Basic Combat Training cycle and measures of military performance. For the ACEP study company, in particular, the pilot presented an opportunity to refine the performance measurement procedures which included the videotaping and scoring of four Basic Combat Training events. These events included the 50-foot rappel and three obstacle course events. Other performance measures included Basic Rifle Marksmanship scores, pre-NBC chamber anxiety, combat lifesaver test scores, Army Physical Fitness Test scores, and graduation status.

The goal of the pilot study was to (1) refine the training content, (2) test and refine performance measurement techniques, (3) identify necessary survey changes, and (4) establish procedures for coordinating the full study. Efficient and thorough coordination of the full study is a fundamental requirement for the science and to this end, two on-site

project coordinators were critical for the success of the pilot study: Mr. Best and Mr. McCausland. The pilot study was briefed to BG May, Commander, Fort Jackson (22 JUN 09), and BG Cornum, Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (26 JUN 09).



Pilot Study Staff, Fort Jackson, SC April 2009

USAMRU-E personnel supporting the pilot study included Dr. Adler (Principal Investigator), MAJ McGurk, SPC Martinez, research assistants Ms. Salvi, Mr. Terry, and Ms. Eckford as well as Ms. Clark, Mr. Klocko and LTC Bliese from the Department of Military Psychiatry, WRAIR.



INVITED TALK ON DECOMPRESSION

At the Third Location Decompression workshop, MAJ McGurk presented an invited talk entitled “US Marines

Decompression Study: Redeploy via Air versus Sea” (authored by MAJ McGurk and COL Castro). The workshop provided an opportunity to review the Third Location Decompression programs across several nations and to examine the research evidence supporting these programs. The workshop was initiated by Technical Panel 13 of The Technical Cooperation Program (TTCP; Portsmouth, UK; 11-12 MAY 09).

INVITED TALK AT NATO SYMPOSIUM

MAJ McGurk presented an invited talk at the NATO-Russia symposium “Social Sciences Support to Military Personnel Engaged in Counter-Insurgency and Counter-Terrorism Operations”. He also served as a technical expert for the symposium (St Petersburg, Russia; 18-20 JUN 09).



NATO SUICIDE MEETING SETS AGENDA

Dr. Wright participated in the

NATO Exploratory Team (ET) 103 Meeting on Suicide in the Military in COU Poljce, Slovenia (15-16 JUN 09). Presentations focused on biological and psychological aspects of suicidal behavior.

NATO ETHICS MEETING IN TORONTO

MAJ McGurk participated in the NATO Research and Technology Task Group “Moral Dilemmas and Mental Health Outcomes” (NATO HFM 179) and presented on *US Army Battlefield Ethics and Law of War Training* (Toronto; 8-9 JUN 09).

MEETING AT TRADOC



Dr. Adler participated in the Accessions Mental Health Screening Meeting hosted by the Command Surgeon, US Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), Fort Monroe,

VA. (28-29 MAY 09).

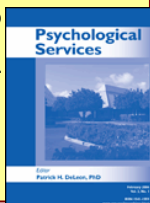
NEW PUBLICATION

LEADERSHIP IMPACTS STIGMA

Wright, K. M., Cabrera, O. A., Bliese, P. B., Adler, A. B., Hoge, C. W., & Castro, C.A. (2009). Stigma and Barriers to Care in Soldiers Postcombat. *Psychological Services*, 6, 108–116.

This study examined the effects of leadership and unit cohesion on mental health stigma and perceived barriers to care. A sample of 680 Soldiers from combat support units was surveyed three months following their return from combat operations in Iraq.

Soldiers who rated their leaders more highly and who reported higher unit cohesion also reported lower scores on both stigma and perceived barriers to care. Thus, positive leadership and unit cohesion may reduce perceptions of stigma and barriers to care, even after accounting for the relationship between mental health symptoms and these outcomes.



BATTLEMIND STUDY LINKED TO AUSTRALIAN RECRUIT TRAINING



Dr. Adler attended the annual Technical Panel 13 meeting on “Psychological Health and Operational Effectiveness”, a 5-nation research group within The Technical and Cooperation Program (TTCP). The meeting was held from 27 APR 09 to 30 APR 09 in Melbourne,

Canberra, and Wagga, Australia, and included a special focus on the resilience training programs in the member nations. To facilitate international collaboration in assessing the validity of resilience training at Basic Training, the meeting included an on-site visit to the Army Recruit Training Centre at Kapooka (4 MAY 09). Australian resilience researchers and training developers met with TP-13 counterparts in Canberra and Wagga. In addition, the team briefed the Commandant of the Army Recruit Training Centre (ARTC). US and Australian resilience training research efforts are comparable in that both the US Battlemind and Australian BattleSMART programs were developed to integrate valid mental health training across the military career cycle. Finally, presentations were also conducted in support of an Australian Defence Force (ADF) conference in Canberra (1 MAY 09).



INVITED TALK IN THE BALTICS

MAJ McGurk provided a full day invited workshop on conducting Battlemind Training to military psychologists from Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia as part of their third Baltic Military Psychology Forum (14-15 MAY, Kaunas, Lithuania). ADD PHOTO

WEST POINT CADETS INTERN AT USAMRU-E



Two cadets, Cadet Todd and Cadet Meredith, from the US Military Academy at West Point interned at USAMRU-E as part of their summer program under the supervision of Ms. Eckford, SGT Williams, and CPT Wood. They obtained experience working on research related to Soldier psychological reactions to combat deployment (18 JUN – 4 JUL 09).

PERSONNEL UPDATES

- Mr. Rahey received the Department of the Army Achievement Medal for Civilian Service for exceptional service as Administrative Officer (19 Feb 09).
- CPT Wood, a research psychologist, PCSed to the unit on 21 JUN 09 from the Department of Military Psychiatry, WRAIR.
- SGT Williams completed the Combat Operational Stress Control course in San Antonio, TX from 18-21 MAY 09.

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