



# “WRAIR Forward”

September 2009, NO. 49

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

The USAMRU-E consists of four Ph.D.-level scientists and seven support staff. This is a small group, yet the unit is having a big impact on Soldier behavioral health. The evaluation of Battlemind Training for Basic Combat Training described in this *WRAIR Forward* will be the basis for the Army’s resilience sustainment training given to all Soldiers beginning military service. In addition, the post-deployment mental health assessments described below provide operational unit commanders with important information on the impact of a year-long combat deployment on their Soldiers as well as potential targets for behavioral health intervention. Finally, USAMRU-E staff continue to collaborate with Army leadership, academic experts, and international counterparts to ensure scientifically validated behavioral health training for service members.

-MAJ Dennis McGurk

## ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF OBSERVES WRAIR TRAINING AT FT JACKSON

GEN Casey visited Ft Jackson to bring attention to the Army’s new resilience training initiatives. As part of his visit, GEN Casey observed Battlemind Training [now Sustainment Resilience Training] for Basic Combat Training being assessed as part of the Mental Fitness Study (see column, right). After being briefed on the study by Dr. Adler, GEN Casey observed the training conducted by Mr. Rinehart (photo below). The morning began with a resilience breakfast in which selected Ft Jackson personnel and Dr. Adler were invited to discuss resilience training with GEN Casey. Several media outlets reported on this story.



Army Chief of Staff GEN Casey (center) speaks with Dr. Adler (right) and BG Cornum (left; Director, Comprehensive Soldier Fitness), while observing Basic Combat Training Soldiers receive Battlemind Training [now Sustainment Resilience Training] from Mr. Rinehart (WRAIR) at Ft Jackson (30 JUL 09).

Prior to this Ft Jackson visit, Dr. Adler served as a subject matter expert for a meeting with the Army Chief of Staff and his senior leaders on resiliency training (8 JUL 09).

## MENTAL FITNESS STUDY AT BASIC TRAINING: FULL STUDY BEGINS

USAMRU-E, together with members of the Army Center for Enhanced Performance (ACEP), initiated the Mental Fitness Study in July. The study assesses the efficacy of 2 existing Army programs designed to increase mental fitness in the Basic Combat Training context. Battlemind Training [now Sustainment Resilience Training] targets behavioral health, and ACEP education targets performance. Both programs were adapted for Basic Combat Training and were piloted with 2 companies from April to June.

### FULL STUDY DESIGN

The full study includes 4 Battalions of Basic Combat Training Soldiers. Platoons from 2 of the Battalions are randomly assigned to either 2-hour Battlemind Training or 2 hours of comparison training. Platoons from the other 2 Battalions are randomly assigned to either 8-hours of ACEP education or 8 hours of comparison training. In both cases, the comparison training consists of relevant military history stories.

### COLLABORATION

The Battlemind was modeled on the Australian Defence Force’s BattleSMART program. In preparing the Battlemind study team to deliver the training, USAMRU-E invited MAJ Moss, chief of Mental Health, Army Recruit Training Centre, Australian Defence Force, to work with the study team at Ft Jackson (5-10 JUL 09).

The team consisted of USAMRU-E staff MAJ McGurk (lead trainer) and CPT Wood, as well as staff from the Department of Military Psychiatry, WRAIR, Mr. Rinehart (co-lead trainer) and CPT Johnson, and Army Medical Department Center and School trainer Mr. Hagan (5-19 JUL 09). Dr. Adler (study Principal Investigator), Ms. Clark (Dept. of Military Psychiatry, WRAIR) and SPC Martinez (USAMRU-E), provided support. In training the second Battalion, the training team was joined by Mr. Keller from the Department of Military Psychiatry (26-30 AUG 09).

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND THE WAY AHEAD

- Dr. Adler and project coordinators (Mr. Best, Mr. Barnes, and Mr. McCausland) conducted several orientation meetings with study team members and staff responsible for data collection (JUL 09).
- Research Triangle Institute (RTI) staff collected data from Victory Tower, the Confidence Course, Basic Rifle Marksmanship Grouping, and the NBC chamber from two Battalions
- In a joint effort, USAMRU-E staff conducted the first two surveys with the first study Battalion and RTI conducted the rest.
- Certificates of recognition were presented to Victory University (Ft Jackson) for providing additional training courses, Army Community Services for providing ombudsman support, and Marriott Hotel staff for their hospitality and flexibility (Columbia, SC, SEP 09)
- Dr. Adler and LTC Bliese visited RTI analysts on 15-16 SEP 09 in Raleigh, NC.
- Data collection will be completed in OCT 09.
- An initial report detailing key results will be completed in mid-December 09.

## TRACKING POST-DEPLOYMENT

### BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



USAMRU-E conducted the follow-up to a Command-Directed Mental Health Assessment of the 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment (2SCR) in Vilseck, Germany from 12-14 AUG 09. The initial assessment was conducted 22-25 MAR 09, after the Regiment returned from a 15-month deployment to Iraq in November 2008. The intent of the follow-up assessment was to track changes in mental health indicators from the first assessment, and to further identify specific needs and optimal timing for interventions.



Dr. Wright provides survey instructions during data collection with the 2SCR.

The follow-up assessment surveyed 1,230 Soldiers from five maneuver squadrons of the 2SCR, and 14 Junior Enlisted and 9 Non-Commissioned Officers

participated in focus groups. Interviews were also conducted with behavioral

health care providers from the U.S. Army Health Clinic in Vilseck. In addition to the surveys and interviews, Post-Deployment Health Assessment and Post-Deployment ReAssessment rates and unit-level archival data on risk indicators were also obtained.

The assessment team was led by USAMRU-E scientist Dr. Wright, with support provided by CPT Wood, Ms. Eckford, Ms. Salvi, Mr. Terry and SPC Martinez. The Regimental Surgeon, CPT Burgess, provided ongoing coordination with 2SCR units.

### ARMY LEADERS BRIEFED BY USAMRU-E

- CPT Wood presented USAMRU-E's work to Army Surgeon General LTG Schoomaker (Heidelberg; 19 Aug 09).
- MAJ McGurk briefed the US Army, Europe's Command Sergeants Major on Military Resilience Training (22 SEP 09; Ramstein Air Force Base).

### US-HUNGARIAN CONFERENCE

MAJ McGurk presented “The US Army Resilience Sustainment Training Program: An Overview” at the 17th Annual American-Hungarian Military Medical Conference (8-12 SEP 09; Budapest, Hungary).



### APA CONVENTION & UNIT HIGHLIGHTS

USAMRU-E research was featured as part of the 117<sup>th</sup> American Psychological Association meeting in Toronto, Canada (6-9 AUG 09; Dr. Adler attended).

Adler, A.B., Bliese, P.B., McGurk, D., Salvi, A., & Eckford, R. Mitigating the impact of combat through expressive writing: A randomized controlled trial. In A.B. Adler & P.D. Bliese (Chairs), *Expressive Writing After Returning from Combat: Two New Studies*. Symposium.

Adler, A.B., & Castro, C.A. Reconceptualizing the Diagnosis of Combat-related Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. In C.A. Castro (Chair), *Conceptualizing, Diagnosing, and Treating Combat-Related Traumatic Stress*. Symposium.

Cabrera, O.A., Wright, K.M., Bliese, P.D., & Adler, A.B. (2009, August). *Post-combat functioning and the development of post-traumatic stress*. Poster.

### INVITED TALK AT GERMAN MEETING

Dr. Adler presented “Resilience Training for US Soldiers Returning from Combat: Research and Future Directions” at the Wehrmedizinisches Symposium des Sanitätsamtes (Military Medicine Symposium; 21-22 AUG 09; Neuherberg).



## INTEGRATING TRAINING WITH CSF

The Army's new Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (CSF) is designed to increase resilience through self-assessment, self-development, and Comprehensive Military Resilience Training. USAMRU-E is providing subject matter support. There are three components of training (see adjacent diagram).



- Preparation training is based on the University of Pennsylvania program on positive psychology and resilience from Drs. Reivich and Seligman. The goal is to prepare NCOs and Drill SGTs in self-awareness and self-regulation and to train them in teaching these concepts to their Soldiers.
- Enhancement training is based on the Army Center for Enhanced Performance's performance psychology curriculum (see the *Mental Fitness Study* article, first page).
- Sustainment training, formerly Battlemind Training, is focused on helping Soldiers transition to combat and back home again and on behavioral health skills for leaders.

Several meetings have supported the CSF initiatives:

### UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA RESILIENCE COURSE

Dr. Adler attended the initial component of the Master Resilience Trainer Course (10-12 AUG 09); MAJ McGurk trained the Battlemind component with Mr. Rinehart (17 AUG 09; Philadelphia, PA).

### COMPREHENSIVE SOLDIER FITNESS COORDINATION

CSF held a coordination meeting that Dr. Adler, LTC Bliese, and Mr. Rinehart attended in order to plan for implementation of the CSF program (20-21 AUG 09; Crystal City, VA).

### BATTELMIND SUMMIT

A summit addressing Battlemind's integration with CSF was held with WRAIR personnel and members of the Army Medical Department Center and School Battlemind Training Office (23-24 AUG 09; MAJ McGurk, Dr. Adler, CPT Wood; Ft Jackson, SC).

### FEEDBACK COORDINATED FOR TRAINING COURSE

Dr. Adler, Mr. Rinehart, and ACEP leadership provided integrated feedback to CSF on the training curriculum (8 SEP 09; West Point).

### PRESENTATIONS ON FAMILY RESEARCH

Nichols, L., Martindale-Adams, J., Miller, P. McDevitt-Murphy, M., Thompson, K., Graney, M., Burns, R., Riviere, L., & Wright, K. (2009). *Military Health Research Forum*, Kansas City.

- Spouse BATTLEMIND Support Groups.
- The Role of Spouse Telephone BATTLEMIND Pilot Project.

### RESEARCH PROGRAM REVIEWED

Dr. Adler and Dr. Wright attended the external (AIBS) review of the research conducted by USAMRU-E and the Department of Military Psychiatry, WRAIR. (10-11 SEP 09, Frederick, MD).

### PERSONNEL UPDATES

- Ms Eckford was hired as a GS-11 Survey Statistician on 6 JUL 09.
- MAJ McGurk and SFC Abrahamson attended the ERMIC Commander's/NCOIC Conference (21-22 SEP 09; Heidelberg).
- Dr. Sinclair began as a part time contractor 16 JUN 09.

This is an unofficial Army publication, authorized under the provisions of AR 360-1, published quarterly in the interest of the U.S. Army Medical Research Unit-Europe. Material has been reviewed by the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. There is no objection to its presentation and/or publication. The opinions or assertions contained herein are the private views of the author, and are not to be construed as official, or as reflecting true views of the Department of the Army or the Department of Defense. For information on our research initiatives, visit <http://www.usamru-e.hqsareur.army.mil/> or contact MRU-Webmaster@hbg.amedd.army.mil  
Commander, USAMRU-E  
Editor  
MAJ Dennis McGurk  
Amy B. Adler, Ph.D.