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## When It Comes to PTSD in the Military, Sexual Trauma Can Cause as Much Damage as Combat

CHICAGO, Oct. 28 /PRNewswire/ -- Post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, continues to inflict a mental and physical toll on America's soldiers, leaving physical, emotional and spiritual scars long after these veterans have left their posts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Additionally, for female soldiers, sexual assault and rape can create similar, and many times more treatment-resistant, symptoms of PTSD, according to Dr. Kimberly Dennis. She currently serves as medical director at Timberline Knolls Residential Treatment Center, one of the leading [residential treatment centers](#) for [eating disorders](#) and addictions, with or without [trauma](#) or a [co-occurring disorder](#).

"It has been well-documented in research literature that women are already twice as likely to develop PTSD as men following a trauma," said Dr. Dennis. "And in the military, women have to deal with increased rates of sexual harassment and assault. Recent studies have shown that even without exposure to combat, our female troops could have increased rates of developing PTSD following rape or sexual assault than they could after combat."

Sexual assault in the military has been a serious problem throughout history. Among those seeking VA disability following the first Persian Gulf War, 71 percent of women reported sexual assault during their military service. At present time, for women in the military, 21.5 percent suffer some kind of sexual trauma while serving, while among men the numbers are closer to 1.1 percent.

Recently presented in early October at this year's National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) Conference, Dr. Dennis says [trauma](#) affects the brain's ability to function and sexual trauma is particularly damaging. "Trauma can lead in some cases to psychological reactivity, exaggerated startle response, symptoms of avoidance and numbing, and co-morbid mood, substance abuse and/or [eating disorders](#)," says Dr. Dennis. "Post traumatic stress disorder can have devastating effects on all areas of a sufferer's life...I see this daily in the girls and women at Timberline Knolls."

A Veterans Health Administration (VHA) outpatient survey discovered that 55 percent of women reported sexual harassment, and 23 percent reported sexual assault. A study of reservists found that 60 percent of female soldiers had been sexually harassed and 13.1 percent sexually assaulted.

"Even though the numbers are staggering for our service women, there is hope," adds Dr. Dennis. "[PTSD](#) can be effectively treated with trauma informed interventions. By integrating mental health and trauma treatment approaches into counseling, greater improvements can be yielded than by just providing basic psychological treatments or several core therapies separately."

### **About Timberline Knolls Residential Treatment Center**

Timberline Knolls is one of the leading [residential treatment centers](#) for eating disorders, [alcoholism](#) and [drug abuse](#), with or without [trauma](#), a [dual diagnosis](#) or [co-occurring disorder](#). Expert treatment staff offers a nurturing environment of recovery for women and girls (ages 12 and older) on a wooded 43-acre campus in suburban Chicago.

Women and families seeking [Christian treatment](#) have the option of working with a dedicated Christian therapist. For more information on [Timberline Knolls Residential Treatment Center](#), call us at 877.257.9611.

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