

## Researchers uncover more about PTSD

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SAN FRANCISCO (KGO) -- Thousands of American troops will be coming home from Afghanistan soon. On Wednesday night, President Barack Obama announced a new exit strategy and a major troop reduction which could result in a total of 33,000 men and women returning home over the next 15 months.

And many will be coming home suffering from a disorder that's now being described as an epidemic, wounds of war worse than anyone ever imagined. The latest research was unveiled in San Francisco Wednesday on post traumatic stress disorder.

Doctors now say PTSD is not just mental it is a disorder that affects the entire body. Vets with PTSD are more likely to be diagnosed with cancer, heart disease and other illnesses and these troops that survived war, are dying earlier at home.

"I took an AK round to my distal femur, my right lower femur," said retired Navy Seal Jimmy Hatch.

After six tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, those are the physical wounds Hatch lives with. The psychological wounds run just as deep.

"I had a lot of drugs running through my system and I had a very difficult time adjusting to it and I was embarrassed about it, so much so that I really isolated myself," said Hatch.

Shell shock, battle fatigue, post traumatic stress disorder, whatever the name, studies show as many as 20 percent of all vets returning from Iraq and Afghanistan live with PTSD and new research just released by the San Francisco VA Medical Center confirms what many vets have long known: PTSD is not just an illness that haunts the mind, it affects the entire body.

Former Rep. Patrick Kennedy, D- Rhode Island, now a health care advocate, was on hand for Wednesday's announcement.

"For many of our soldiers the war is just beginning. So the question is are we going to be there for them as they were there for us?" said Kennedy.

The research found that Iraq and Afghanistan war vets with PTSD are two to three times more likely than vets without PTSD to suffer from heart disease. Older vets with PTSD are twice as likely to develop dementia and vets with PTSD are less likely to survive a year after undergoing surgery.

"There is something about the mind-body connection and the impact that having

