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## Writing the Book on Military Mental Health

Posted by **MARK THOMPSON** Thursday, September 8, 2011 at 7:33 am

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Dr. Elspeth Ritchie

The literature of war *can* be literature -- think Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* (Civil War), Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (World War I), or Neil Sheehan's *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam*. And sometimes it's less *lit* and more *textbook*. That's surely the case with the publication of *Combat and Operational Behavioral Health*. Catchy title it's not.

It's edited (and contributed to) by *Battleland's* own Dr. Elspeth "Cam" Ritchie, and because she's too modest to toot her own horn, we've decided to blow it for her. The Army's former top psychiatrist, she and 152 of her colleagues, largely from the field of military mental health, have just released the latest medical science on the mental challenges associated with combat. They spent six years writing (and rewriting) chapters dealing with everything from post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide, drug dependency, and all of the pathologies we've come to associate with a decade of non-stop war. But they also write about good things: the important role played by chaplains in keeping military minds healthy, for example, and the need to develop ways of improving troops' mental resilience.

We're asking Dr. Ritchie about the book, published by the Army's Borden Institute (its contents can be downloaded -- for free -- [here](#)):

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