



Stanford Study Finds Staggering Rates of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Among Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans

A recent study conducted by Stanford University found that rates of PTSD among service members deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan may be as high as 35%. With two million troops deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, we can expect that an astounding 700,000 veterans will suffer from PTSD.

San Francisco, CA (Vocus) September 18, 2009 -- A recent study conducted by Stanford University found that rates of PTSD among service members deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan may be as high as 35%. With two million troops deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, we can expect that an astounding 700,000 veterans will suffer from PTSD.

These numbers are double previously projected numbers because unlike other projections, this study factors in delayed onset of PTSD, which is common. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DoD) must increase staff and resources to accommodate the mental health care needs of Iraq and Afghanistan active duty service members and veterans. The DoD claims that the transition to VA services is a seamless one for veterans, but evidence shows otherwise. Both DoD and VA lack a sufficient number of mental health professionals on staff to diagnose, treat and provide compensation to patients with PTSD. The staff shortage can be attributed to a lack of funding and a national shortage of mental health professionals, however the shortages continue to cause delays in treatment and compensation. In California alone there are 59,659 VA claims that are currently pending process and this number will continue to rise as more troops return home.

"The DoD and VA must work together to eliminate the delays in treatment of and compensation for PTSD and co-occurring mental illnesses," said Michael Blecker, Executive Director of Swords to Plowshares. "With 42% of troops still deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan it is crucial that the DoD improve transitional support and that the VA increase the number of mental health staff in order to provide mental health care and compensation in a timely manner. These delays are unacceptable because they create overwhelming stress and health complications for veterans," Blecker said.

The VA needs to increase the number of mental health professionals in order to diagnose and treat PTSD patients. And they must hire and train additional claims reviewers so that disabled veterans don't have to wait months and years to receive their benefits. Delays in treatment and disability compensation leads to high rates of unemployment, homelessness, family dissolution, incarceration and self medication through substance abuse. In the worst of outcomes, veterans with mental illness and PTSD are nine times more likely to commit suicide than those who do not suffer from a form of mental illness, depression or PTSD.

"Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are often faced with multiple deployments, meaning they are repeatedly exposed to trauma and more likely to develop PTSD," said Blecker. "It is disheartening that even after witnessing the tragic effects that a lack of mental health diagnosis treatment and compensation had on Vietnam veterans, we continue to stigmatize PTSD and other mental illnesses. It is critical that the VA and the DoD improve the level of support, mental health care and access for veterans so that they don't have to endure the suffering that Vietnam veterans faced," Blecker said.

Swords to Plowshares, a veteran service agency based in San Francisco, works with veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars to provide comprehensive care. Many of these young men and women have suffered from PTSD that has gone untreated or undiagnosed. The Iraq Veteran Project at Swords to Plowshares provides comprehensive services including employment and training, supportive housing, legal services and health and social services. Many of the Iraq and Afghanistan veterans seek help with employment and training and work with the legal team at Swords to Plowshares to file for disability compensation and/or a military discharge upgrade. Already, more than a dozen homeless Iraq and Afghanistan veterans sought housing at the agency.

"Community-based organizations, like Swords to Plowshares, are working with Iraq and Afghanistan veterans to provide supportive services and preventative care," said Amy Fairweather, Director of the Iraq Veteran Project at Swords to Plowshares. "We try to reduce the stigma and make sure that these veterans seek care immediately so that they don't have to suffer alone," said Fairweather.

War causes wounds and suffering that last beyond the battlefield. Our mission is to heal the wounds, to restore dignity, hope, and self-sufficiency to all veterans in need, and to reduce homelessness and poverty among veterans. Learn more about the work of Swords to Plowshares, and ways in which you can help, by visiting our website at www.stp-sf.org.

###

Contact Information

Colleen Corliss
Swords to Plowshares
<http://www.stp-sf.org>
415-655-7248

Disclaimer: If you have any questions regarding information in these press releases please contact the company listed in the press release.
Please do not contact PRWeb®. We will be unable to assist you with your inquiry.
PRWeb® disclaims any content contained in these releases. Our complete disclaimer appears [here](#).

© Copyright 1997-2008, Vocus PRW Holdings, LLC.
Vocus, PRWeb and Publicity Wire are trademarks or registered trademarks of [Vocus, Inc.](#) or Vocus PRW Holdings, LLC.

[Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)