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**U.S. Iraq War Veterans with PTSD Suffer Significant Physical Health Problems**

**Arlington, Va.** - A survey of 2,863 U.S. soldiers one year after combat duty in Iraq revealed that those with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) reported worse physical health, more sick-call visits and more missed workdays. The results of the survey are published in the January issue of *The American Journal of Psychiatry* (AJP), the official journal of the American Psychiatric Association (APA).

The soldiers belonged to four Army combat infantry brigades, and 17 percent met screening criteria for PTSD. The AJP article, "Association of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder with Somatic Symptoms, Health Care Visits, and Absenteeism Among Iraq War Veterans" by Charles W. Hoge, M.D., of Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, found that injury was associated with a higher rate of PTSD. Of those wounded or injured at least once, 32 percent met PTSD criteria compared to 14 percent of those never injured.

PTSD was strongly associated with all of the physical health measures in the survey. Approximately 50 percent of the soldiers with PTSD, but 20 to 25 percent of those without PTSD, stated that their health was poor or fair. Sleep problems and fatigue were reported by more than 70 percent of those with PTSD, compared to about 27 percent without PTSD.

These high rates of physical health problems have important implications for the daily functioning of combat veterans and for the health care systems serving them. They also suggest that combat veterans who seek treatment for significant physical problems should be evaluated for PTSD.

A relationship between PTSD and poor health has been shown in veterans of previous wars, including the 1991 Gulf War. Earlier studies generally were conducted many years after the return from combat, whereas this survey occurred one year after Iraq combat, and the soldiers were still on active duty.

"The study affirms the significant mental health burden of combat, which affects nearly one in five soldiers," stated AJP Editor in Chief Robert Freedman, M.D. "Combat-induced stress afflicts them with chronic pain, fatigue, sleeplessness and worry over their health."

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**Note to Editors:** Contact APA's Office of Communications and Public Affairs at 703-907-8640 or [press@psych.org](mailto:press@psych.org) for an embargoed copy of the article.

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