



STATE OF THE SCIENCE SYMPOSIUM
Caring for Wounded Warriors with
Traumatic Brain Injury
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There are those who speak about you who say, 'he lost an arm, he lost a leg, she lost her sight...' I object. You gave your arm, you gave your leg, you gave your sight. As gifts to your nation. That we might live in freedom. Thank you. And to your families. Families of the fallen and families of the wounded. You sacrificed in ways that those of us who have not walked in your shoes can only imagine".
General Peter Pace (former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff)
Intrepid Center
Brook Army Medical Center

January 2007



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Types of Disabilities



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- ▣ Burns, spinal cord injuries, amputations, visual impairments, hearing loss, and the two signature but invisible wounds of PTSD and TBI.
- ▣ Hearing Loss
- ▣ CBS NEWS reported 60% return home from Iraq and Afghanistan with some kind of hearing loss.
- ▣ Amputations
- ▣ Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) are considered the “signature injuries” (as well as invisible) of these wars

Signature Injuries



- ▶ Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) are considered the “signature injuries” (as well as invisible) of these wars
- ▶ Much discussion around dropping the “D” in the DSM 5 but it is retained

(Without changing the broader institutional factors that result in discrimination against those with the PTSD label, modifying that label seems unlikely to result in a significant increase in individuals willing to be diagnosed or treated. RAND 2013)

Traumatic Brain Injury



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- ▶ Among service members diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury, the majority of cases are concussions. Understanding the characteristics of service members with these injuries and their treatment patterns can inform the delivery of high-quality care.

(RAND Apr 18, 2016)

<http://www.rand.org/topics/traumatic-brain-injury.html>

Traumatic Brain Injury



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- ▶ **Most workplace difficulties are the result of cognitive functional limitations such as remembering, organizing, learning, and planning skills. (Hirsh et al., 1996).**
- ▶ Mild TBI: Symptoms of mild TBI include headache; confusion; lightheadedness; dizziness; blurred vision or tired eyes; ringing in the ears; bad taste in the mouth; fatigue; a change in sleep patterns; mood changes; and trouble with memory, concentration, attention, or thinking. The injury may or may not result in a brief period of unconsciousness.
- ▶ Moderate or Severe TBI: Symptoms of moderate to severe TBI may be similar to symptoms of mild TBI, but they may also include a headache that gets worse or does not go away, repeated vomiting or nausea, convulsions or seizures, inability to awaken from sleep, dilation of one or both pupils of the eyes, slurred speech, weakness or numbness in the arms or legs, loss of coordination, increased confusion, restlessness, or agitation.

Types of Accommodations in the Work Place TBI



Physical Limitations:

- ❖ Install ramps, handrails, and provide “handicap” parking spaces
- ❖ Install lever style door handles
- ❖ Clear pathways of travel of any unnecessary equipment and furniture

Types of Accommodations in the Work Place TBI



Visual Problems:

- ❖ Provide written information in large print
- ❖ Change fluorescent lights to high intensity, white lights
- ❖ Increase natural lighting
- ❖ Provide a glare guard for computer monitors
- ❖ Consult a vision specialist particularly with someone who has lost part of or all of their vision

Types of Accommodations in the Work Place TBI



Maintaining Stamina During the Workday:

- ❖ Permit flexible scheduling, allow longer or more frequent work breaks
- ❖ Provide additional time to learn new responsibilities
- ❖ Provide self-paced workload
- ❖ Provide backup coverage for when the employee needs to take breaks
- ❖ Allow for time off for counseling
- ❖ Allow for use of supportive employment and job coaches
- ❖ Allow employee to work from home during part of the day
- ❖ Provide for job sharing opportunities
- ❖ Allow part-time work schedules

Types of Accommodations in the Work Place TBI



Additional information about TBI including examples of accommodations for: Maintaining Concentration; Difficulty Staying Organized and Meeting Deadlines; Memory Deficits; Problem Solving Deficits; and Working Effectively with Supervisors can be found at

www.askjan.org/media/BrainInjury.html

PTSD



Symptoms of PTSD include:

- ▶ Unwanted and repeated memories of the life-threatening event
- ▶ Flashbacks where the event is relived and person temporarily loses touch with reality
- ▶ Avoidance of people, places, sights, or sounds that are reminders
- ▶ Feelings of detachment from people, even family, and emotional numbness
- ▶ Shame about what happened and was done
- ▶ Survivor guilt with loss of friends or comrades
- ▶ Hypervigilance or constant alertness for threats.

Types of Accommodations in the Work Place PTSD



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Concentration:

- ▶ Reduce distractions in the work area:
 - Provide space enclosures, sound absorption panels, or a private office
 - Allow for use of white noise or environmental sound machines
 - Allow the employee to listen to soothing music
 - Provide a noise cancelling headset
 - Plan for uninterrupted work time
 - Purchase organizers to reduce clutter

Types of Accommodations in the Work Place PTSD



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Concentration (con't)

- ▶ Increase natural lighting or provide full spectrum lighting
- ▶ Allow flexible work environment:
 - Flexible scheduling
 - Modified break schedule
 - Work from home/Flexi-place
- ▶ Divide large assignments into smaller tasks and goals
- ▶ Use auditory or written cues as appropriate
- ▶ Restructure job to include only essential functions
- ▶ Provide memory aids such as schedulers, organizers, and / or apps

Types of Accommodations in the Work Place PTSD



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Memory

- ❖ Provide written as well as verbal instructions
- ❖ Provide written checklists Use a wall calendar
- ❖ Use a daily or weekly task list Provide verbal prompts and reminders Use electronic organizers, hand held devices, and /or apps
- ❖ Allow the employee to record meetings and trainings
- ❖ Provide printed minutes of meetings and trainings

Reasonable Accommodations: Why Are they Needed?



- To have an equal opportunity to compete for a job
- To gain access to the workplace
- To perform the essential functions of the job
- To enjoy equal access to the benefits and privileges of employment
- **Required by law**

KEY ISSUES

- ▣ Hidden injuries of PTSD/TBI
- ▣ Associated stigma/stereotype
- ▣ The stereotypes separates the person
- ▣ The person is then avoided/stigmatized/isolated
- ▣ Limited Work Opportunities
- ▣ Limited Relationships, except with other wounded warriors

NOD Wounded Warrior Careers



- ▣ **Wounded Warrior Careers** – Helping severely wounded, ill and injured warriors transition into work
- ▣ **Return to Careers (R2C)** – Research for NISH/Institute for Economic Empowerment to identify career interests and expand supported employment opportunities
- ▣ **Demonstration program** was designed improve the career transition experience for the most seriously wounded, ill, and injured veterans in transition from the military to civilian careers.
- ▣ **NOD** accomplished this by demonstrating innovative best practices in direct service to Wounded Warriors at three sites

NOD Resources

- ▶ NOD Resources for Wounded Warriors
- ▶ Several years ago the Army's Wounded Warrior Program (AW2) worked closely with the National Organization on Disability (NOD www.nod.org) to assist AW2 Soldiers with employment. All Soldiers served by NOD were referred by AW2 and a high percentage of the Soldiers had a diagnosis of TBI and/or PTSD and many were dual diagnosed.
- ▶ Additional reading and resource material can be found at:
- ▶ http://www.nod.org/research_publications/wvc_vets/ where you will find the following reports:

NOD Resources

- ▶ [Employers' Guide for Welcoming and Supporting Wounded Warriors](#)
- ▶ This guide provide support information for veterans in the workplace. The guide is intended as a primer on the basics of each step in the lifecycle of veterans' employment and offers suggestions on how to successfully design a veterans' employment system for your organization.
- ▶ http://www.nod.org/downloads/best-practices/08_2014_wounded_warrior_careers_employers_guide.pdf

NOD Resources

- ▶ [Career Action Planning Guide for Wounded Warriors](#)
- ▶ This Career Action Planning Guide describes a process for working with veterans with serious disabilities or wounded warriors as they begin the transition to civilian careers.
- ▶ https://www.nod.org/downloads/best-practices/13_career_action_planning_guide_for_wounded_warriors.pdf

NOD Resources

- ▶ [Wounded Warrior Careers Four-Year Report](#)
- ▶ NOD released the results of a four-year evaluation of its Wounded Warrior Careers program and suggested replication of NOD's proven, cost-effective model that successfully places severely wounded veterans into the civilian workforce.
- ▶ [http://www.nod.org/downloads/best-practices/09_wounded_warrior_careers_4-year_report.pdf*](http://www.nod.org/downloads/best-practices/09_wounded_warrior_careers_4-year_report.pdf)

NOD Resources

- ▶ [Return to Careers](#)
- ▶ Findings regarding the career interests and support needs of severely injured veterans, particularly those with Post Traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain Injury.
- ▶ https://www.nod.org/downloads/best-practices/10_rtc_exec_summary.pdf

NOD Resources

- ▶ [Hiring America's Best](#)
- ▶ Toolkits with information to help make workplaces a welcoming, productive and satisfying place for returning veterans and transitioning service members.
- ▶ http://www.nod.org/downloads/best-practices/11a_hiring_americas_best.pdf

NOD Resources

- ▶ [Toolkits for Welcoming Returning Veterans with Disabilities](#)
- ▶ NOD has joined with Give an Hour—an organization that links veterans with mental health services—to produce the following guides on how to successfully integrate veterans into your company.
- ▶ [Welcoming Service Members and Veterans Home](#)
- ▶ [Common Employer Questions About Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury & Post Traumatic Stress Disorder](#)
- ▶ [Productivity Support for People with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder](#)

Questions?



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