

PRE-PUBLICATION EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

POSITION STATEMENT ACCEPTED FOR PUBLICATION IN
THE CLINICAL NEUROPSYCHOLOGIST

Official Position of the Military TBI Task Force on

**The Role of Neuropsychology and Rehabilitation Psychology
in the Evaluation, Management and Research of
Military Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury¹**

APPROVED by:

American Academy of Clinical Neuropsychology (AACN)
American Psychological Association Division 40 (Neuropsychology)
American Psychological Association Division 22 (Rehabilitation Psychology)
National Academy of Neuropsychology (NAN)

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This Position Statement is a summary of the literature and learning regarding current issues raised by the occurrence, treatment and study of traumatic brain injury in military service members and veterans. The Report has been approved by the American Academy of Clinical Neuropsychology (AACN), Divisions 40 (Neuropsychology) and 22 (Rehabilitation Psychology) of the American Psychological Association (APA), and the National Academy of Neuropsychology (NAN) with the goal of providing information of relevance on an important public policy matter within their respective areas of expertise. The Report is not intended to establish guidelines or standards for the professional practice of psychology, nor has it been adopted as official policy by the American Psychological Association or any other division or subunit of APA.

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1. While this document mainly focuses on the role of neuropsychologists and rehabilitation psychologists in the assessment, management and research of traumatic brain injury, the Military TBI Task Force also recognizes the vital role of psychologists from many other specialty areas (e.g., clinical, counseling, health) in providing care to military veterans with TBI, PTSD, and other mental health issues.

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TBI IN TODAY'S WAR

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) has been widely considered the “signature injury” among United States military personnel involved in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. The rate of traumatic brain injury in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) is thought to be significantly higher than any previous war (Warden, 2006). The prevalence of MTBI, as well as the deployment-related circumstances of trauma, also raises concerns about resulting Postconcussion Syndrome (PCS) and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) negatively impacting post-deployment outcome among injured military personnel (Hoge, Auchterlonie, & Milliken, 2006; Hoge et al., 2004).

NEUROPSYCHOLOGY'S RESPONSE

Neuropsychologists and rehabilitation psychologists are uniquely trained specialists who play a vital role in evaluation and treatment of patients with all forms of TBI, as well as PCS and PTSD. These specialty-trained psychologists within the Department of Veterans Affairs, United States Military, Defense Veterans Brain Injury Center, and various civilian settings have cared for injured veterans affected by TBI and PTSD from several military conflicts over the past century.

Recognizing the important role that neuropsychologists and rehabilitation psychologists will play in caring for the large number of our veterans affected by traumatic brain injury, an inter-organizational Military TBI Task Force of experts representing the American Psychological Association (APA) Division 40 (Neuropsychology) and Division 22 (Rehabilitation Psychology), American Academy of Clinical Neuropsychology (AACN), and the National Academy of Neuropsychology (NAN) was recently assembled.

The Military TBI Task Force developed a formal Position Statement addressing the following objectives:

- a) Identify, based on a review of current literature, issues important to delivering effective neuropsychological and psychological care for TBI patients across the DoD and Veterans Health Administration (VHA) care continuum
- b) Review and summarize the existing evidence-based literature regarding the evaluation, management, and rehabilitation of veterans with MTBI, PCS, and PTSD
- c) Outline key research initiatives that both advance our scientific understanding of deployment-related TBI and create a platform of translational research that informs the clinical science of TBI in the general population

TASK FORCE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the increased prevalence and complexity of TBI in the current military combat setting creates a unique set of immediate challenges that require experts to develop new, innovative methods for injury evaluation and treatment. Beyond the front lines, similar challenges will be encountered in the post-deployment evaluation of veterans with documented or suspected MTBI.

The work of the Military TBI Task Force highlights the critical issues relevant to deployment-related TBI and provides information about evidence-based approaches to TBI from the perspective of neuropsychology and rehabilitation psychology. As research-oriented experts in

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evidence-based specialties, neuropsychologists and rehabilitation psychologists should and will be vital contributors to the process of developing effective military medical operations for the management of TBI across the care continuum, and to addressing the needs of the military veteran affected by TBI.

The challenge of providing appropriate assessment and treatment of mild TBI to the potentially high numbers of soldiers who may benefit reflects a significant opportunity for collaboration between military and civilian health care providers, perhaps more so than ever previously encountered. Although many military personnel are being cared for within the DoD and DVA systems, community based partnerships are being formed both nationally and locally. This consensus statement helps pave the road for collaboration in providing evidence-based practice and promoting joint research endeavors.

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