Psychological Effects of the Long War and Mitigation and Treatment

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Objectives

• Know the symptoms of PTSD and other psychological effects of war
• Learn about both evidence based and new and innovative forms of treatment
• Understand how to reduce barriers to care, including negative side-effects of treatment.
OUTLINE

1. Background and History
2. 9/11 at the Pentagon
3. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
4. Therapies for PTSD
   1. Including dogs!
5. Suicide in the US Army
6. Mefloquine (Lariam)
7. Emerging strategies to Care for veterans
8. Women at War
9. Discussion
A Brief History of Psychological Reactions to War

- World War I—“shell shock”, over evacuation led to chronic psychiatric conditions
- World War II—ineffective pre-screening, “battle fatigue”, lessons relearned, 3 hots and a cot
- The Korean War---initial high rates of psychiatric casualties, then dramatic decrease

Principles of “PIES” (proximity, immediacy, expectancy, simplicity)
A Brief History of Psychological Reactions to War

• Vietnam War 1960s
  – Drug and alcohol use, misconduct
  – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder not yet defined

• Desert Storm/Shield
  – “Persian Gulf illnesses”, medically unexplained physical symptoms

• Operations Other than War (OOTW)
  – Combat and Operational Stress Control, routine front line mental health treatment

Slide 5
9/11/2001 in Washington DC

- Beautiful clear fall day
- New York attack
- Pentagon burning
- Reports of bombs elsewhere
- Are We at War?
Combat Stress Control Principles Applied

• Proximity, Immediacy, Expectancy. Simplicity
• DiLorenzo Medical Clinic at the Pentagon
  – Army, Air Force, Navy personnel operations for medical and mental health services
• -Groups
  – People more open to talk in workplace or at ‘coffee rounds’
Development of A Sustained Response

• Family Assistance Center
• Operation Solace
The Pentagon Family Assistance Center

- Tended to families of all victims
- The Sheraton in Crystal City
  - Extended family, children
  - Most lived there for up to a month
- Services
  - Informational briefings
  - Red Cross
  - Department of Justice, FBI
  - Counseling
  - Childcare
    - recreation
  - Medical care
  - DNA collection
The Pentagon Memorial at the Dedication
Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn

• Numerous stressors
  – Multiple and extended deployments
  – Battlefield stressors
    • IEDs, ambushes, severe sleep deprivation,
  – Medical
    • Severely wounded Soldiers, injured children, detainees

• Changing sense of mission

• Strong support of American people for Soldiers

• Major Focus of senior US Army Staff

• Numerous new programs developed to support Soldiers and Families
The US Army since 9/11

- Volunteer Army
  - Know they are going to war
  - Seasoned, fatigued
  - Large Reserve Component
  - Reserve, National Guard
- Elevated suicide rate
- Wounded Soldiers
- Effects on Families
  - Continuous deployments
  - Families of deceased
  - Families of wounded
- Difficult Economy
  - Recruiting easier
Range of Deployment-Related Stress Reactions

• Mild to moderate
  – Combat Stress and Operational Stress Reactions (Acute)
  – Post-traumatic stress (PTS) or disorder (PTSD)
  – Symptoms such as irritability, bad dreams, sleeplessness
  – Family / Relationship / Behavioral difficulties
  – Alcohol abuse
  – “Compassion fatigue” or provider fatigue
  – Suicidal behaviors

• Moderate to severe
  – Increased risk taking behavior leading to accidents
  – Depression
  – Alcohol dependence
  – Completed suicides
PTSD DSM IV Diagnostic Concept

• Traumatic experience leads to:
  • Threat of death/serious injury
  • Intense fear, helplessness or horror

• Symptoms (3 main types)
  • Reexperiencing the trauma (flashbacks, intrusive thoughts)
  • Numbing & avoidance (social isolation)
  • Physiologic arousal (“fight or flight”)

• Which may cause impairment in
  • Social or occupational functioning

• Persistence of symptoms

\textit{mTBI (mild Traumatic Brain injury) may be associated with PTSD, especially in the context of Blast or other weapons injury}
DSM 5 Definition of PTSD

• Removes Criterion A-2
• Additional criteria
  – Somatic reactions
  – Sleep
  – Depressive symptoms
  – Anger and irritability
Evidence Based Approaches for PTSD

• Psychotherapy
  – Cognitive behavioral therapy
    • Cognitive processing therapy
  – Prolonged exposure

• Pharmacotherapy
  – Selective Serotonin Re-uptake Inhibitors (SSRIs)

Problem: Soldiers do not like these approaches

EMDR (eye-movement desensitization) is also considered evidence-based
Psychotherapy

• “Manualized” therapies have been shown effective in research trials.
  – Cognitive behavioral therapy (and a variant called cognitive processing therapy)
  – Prolonged exposure.

• CPT and PE usually delivered by psychologists and social workers.

• Available in military and Veteran’s Affairs settings, less so in the civilian setting.

• “Virtual reality”.
  – self-administered via computer.
  – “Virtual Iraq” is simulated.
Pharmacotherapy

• SSRIs sertraline (Zoloft) and paroxetine (Paxil)
  – Only these two are FDA approved.
• Other SSRIs are commonly used for PTSD.
• Bupropion (Wellbutrin) is often well tolerated without the weight gain. It helps reverse sexual side-effects.
• Second generation (atypical) anti-psychotics are often used as augmentation both for depression and PTSD
  – While politically controversial, clinicians find low doses useful.
  – quetiapine (Seroquel) is commonly used for trauma induced nightmares at low doses of 25 to 50 mgs.
  – However these medications may cause unacceptable weight gain, so use sparingly.
• Prazosin (Minipress), a blood pressure medication, is used to decrease nightmares.
Sexual Health

• May be compromised in PTSD, TBI, more severe injuries (amputations, genito-urinary injuries)
  – Bomb signature weapon of the war

• Sexual side-effects are common with SSRIs
  • Anorgasmia, erectile dysfunction, ejaculatory delay,
  • consider bupropion daily or ciproheptadine (Periactin) prn

• Needs to be discussed by primary care, mental health

• Phosphodiesterase inhibitors (Viagra, Cialis, Levitra) useful
Sleep medications

• Insomnia is extremely common in PTSD.
• Improving sleep is critically important to recovery.
• Consider standard sleep medications,
  – Trazodone 50 to 100 mgs (warn re priapism).
  – Zolpidem (Ambien) 5-12.5 mg (warn about sleepwalking)
  – Eszopiclone (Lunesta) 1-3 mgs (warn about unpleasant taste)
  – Warn about interactions with alcohol, other sedating medications.
• Avoid benzodiazapines,
  – especially alprazolam (Xanax) because of the short half-life.
Clinical pearls

• The following are not yet FDA approved, but helpful strategies.
• If PTSD related anxiety, try propranolol (Inderal).
• Again quetiapine and prazosin are helpful to decrease nightmares.
• Combine medication, psychotherapy and innovative approaches.
• Focus on therapeutic alliance.
New and Innovative Approaches

• Integrative therapies
  – Acupuncture
  – Stellate ganglion block
  – Yoga
  – Canine therapy
  – Mindfulness/meditation
  – Technology
    • Virtual reality

Common denominator: help to engage the patient
Innovative Approaches

• Anecdotally very helpful but not yet evidence based.
• Do not require the patient to talk
• Available at some military, veterans affairs but few civilian facilities.
• Acupuncture probably has the best evidence base for use in PTSD
• Stellate ganglion block is an anesthetic technique for pain, which seems to relieve PTSD symptoms.
• Other strategies include
  – art therapy
  – yoga
  – marital arts
  – exercise
  – meditation and/or mindfulness and
  – canine therapy
  – fish oil (omega three fatty acids)
How training service dogs addresses PTSD symptoms

Training dog as biofeedback

**PTSD Symptom Clusters**

- Re-experiencing (B)
- Avoidance and Numbing (C)
- Increased Arousal (D)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Posttraumatic_stress_disorder
Co-morbidities

- The following are all very common with PTSD:
  - substance use
  - depression
  - TBI
  - physical injuries
  - pain
  - unemployment and
  - homelessness.
Traumatic Brain Injury

• Signature wound of Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF)
• “Invisible Wound”
• 80% of TBIs are rated as “mild” in severity
• mTBI = concussion
  – Brief Loss of Consciousness or Alteration of Consciousness
  – Brief, if any, period of amnesia
  – Expectation of rapid and full recovery
What is TBI?

• Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is a disruption of function in the brain resulting from a blow or jolt to the head or penetrating head injury.

• TBI can be caused by:
  – Falls
  – Motor vehicle and motorcycle crashes
  – Assaults
  – Explosions
  – Sports injuries

• Mild to severe
• Mild TBI=concussion
• Even mild TBIs may have long lasting side effects
Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)....
Behavioral Aspects of TBI

- Changes in cognitive abilities
- Poor impulse control
- Acting out behavior
Risk Factors for Suicide in Army Personnel

- Major Psychiatric Illness Not a Significant Contributor
  - Adjustment disorders, substance abuse common
- Relationships
- Legal/Occupational Problems
- Substance Abuse
- Pain/Disability
- Weapons
  - 70% with firearm
- Recent Trends
  - Older, higher rank, more females
Screening and Surveillance
The DoD Suicide Event Report

- The Department of Defense implemented the DoD Suicide Event Report (DoDSER) based on the Army Suicide Event Report (ASER), which was validated by the U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command.
- DoDSERs are submitted for suicide behaviors that result in death, hospitalization or evacuation from theater.
- Data collected from standardized records (e.g., medical records, CID).
- Army DoDSERs due w/in 60–days.
- Objective, detailed, and standardized information collected:
  - Comprehensive data (method, location, fatality)
    - Extensive risk factor data
      - Dispositional or personal
      - Historical or developmental
      - Contextual or situational
      - Clinical or symptom factors
Past Suicide Mitigation Approaches

• Analysis of Incident Suicides
  – DOD Suicide Event Report (DODSER)
  – Epidemiologic Consultations (EPICONS)
• Clinical interventions to identify and treat high risk individuals
• Training Soldiers, Leaders and Family Members to recognize and respond
  – ASSIST
  – ACE
  – Battlemind
  – Beyond the Front
  – Stand-Down Training
Screening and Surveillance
Annual and Post Deployment Screens

• The Department of Defense has mandated annual and post-deployment screening for PTSD and depression
  – Post-deployment Health Assessment (PDHA): Conducted within 30 days of service members returning from deployment (begun 1998, s/p first Gulf War)
  – Post-deployment Health Re-assessment (PDHRA): Conducted within 3-6 months for service members returning from deployment (began 2005 in Army)
  – Periodic Health Assessment (PHA): Conducted annually (2009)
• Screening is based on an interview with a behavioral health care provider using a standardized interview guide. Service members at risk will received immediate intervention or a mental health referral.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veterans_benefits_for_post-traumatic_stress_disorder_in_the_United_States
Suicide Risk Assessment

- Improve suicide assessment and evaluation (primary care, behavioral health clinic, VA).
- Train behavioral health and medical care providers at all levels
- Improve engagement and retention in behavioral health care employing motivational interviewing techniques.
- Involve close family members and friends where ever possible.
- Inform and educate unit leaders as appropriate.
- Enhanced focus on postvention efforts (maintain vigilance post crisis), including cases of completed suicides.
Factors Associated with Physical Aggression Among U.S. Army Soldiers

Surveys collected six months post-deployment measuring overt aggressive behavior

Aggressive behavior associated with:

- highest level of combat intensity
- misuse of alcohol
- diagnosis of PTSD
- diagnosis of TBI
- prior altercation w/significant other
- lower rank (E1-E4)
Causal Factors for Violence Among Soldiers

• Multiple individual, unit, and community factors appear to have converged to shift the population risk to the right

**Facts**

**Individual**
- Criminality/Misconduct
- Alcohol / Drugs
- BH Issues (untreated/under-treated)

**Unit**
- Turnover
- Leadership (Stigma)
- Training / Skills

**Environment**
- Turbulence
- Family Stress / Deployment
- Community
- Stigma
Strategies to Decrease Violence

• While it is important to identify and help individual Soldiers, the biggest impact will come from programs that shift the overall population risk back to the left.

• Effective medical treatment can prevent individuals from increasing in risk or decrease their risk, but it cannot shift overall population risk very much.

Army Campaign Plan:
• Health Promotion, Risk Reduction, and Suicide Prevention
• Increase Resiliency
• Decrease Alcohol/Drug Abuse
• Decrease Untreated/Undertreated BH
• Decrease Stigma to Seeking Care
• Decrease Relationship/Family Problems
• Decrease Legal/Financial Issues

Installation:
• Reintegration (Plus)
  ➢ Mobile Behavioral Health Teams
  ➢ Mental Toughness Training
  ➢ Resiliency Training
  ➢ Military Family Life Consultants
  ➢ Decompression Reintegration
  ➢ Warrior Adventure Quest

• Consistent Stigma Reduction themes
An image of a news segment discussing Lariam, a medication used to prevent malaria. The segment includes a graphic with the text "The Dark Side of Lariam" and a box of Lariam medication. The news anchor is discussing the controversial reputation of Lariam among travelers, mentioning side effects such as depression, hallucinations, and aggression. The image also shows a poster with the text "Lariam 250 mg Mefloquina."
Mefloquine may cause neuropsychiatric adverse reactions that can persist after mefloquine has been discontinued. Mefloquine should not be prescribed for prophylaxis in patients with major psychiatric disorders. During prophylactic use, if psychiatric or neurologic symptoms occur, the drug should be discontinued and an alternative medication should be substituted (see WARNINGS).

Psychiatric Adverse Reactions

Psychiatric symptoms ranging from anxiety, paranoia, and depression to hallucinations and psychotic behavior can occur with mefloquine use. Symptoms may occur early in the course of mefloquine use. In some cases, these symptoms have been reported to continue for months or years after mefloquine has been stopped. Cases of suicidal ideation and suicide have been reported. Mefloquine should not be prescribed for prophylaxis in patients with active depression, generalized anxiety disorder, psychosis, or schizophrenia or other major psychiatric disorders. Mefloquine should be used with caution in patients with a previous history of depression.

During prophylactic use, the occurrence of psychiatric symptoms such as acute anxiety, depression, restlessness or confusion suggest a risk for more serious psychiatric disturbances or neurologic adverse reactions. In these cases, the drug should be discontinued and an alternative medication should be substituted.
Neurologic Adverse Reactions

Neurologic symptoms such as dizziness or vertigo, tinnitus, and loss of balance have been reported. These adverse reactions may occur early in the course of mefloquine use and in some cases have been reported to continue for months or years after mefloquine has been stopped. Dizziness or vertigo, tinnitus, and loss of balance have been reported to be permanent in some cases. During prophylactic use, if neurologic symptoms occur, the drug should be discontinued and an alternative medication should be substituted.

The most frequently reported adverse events are nausea, vomiting, loose stools or diarrhea, abdominal pain, dizziness or vertigo, loss of balance, and neuropsychiatric events such as headache, somnolence, and sleep disorders (insomnia, abnormal dreams). These adverse reactions may occur early in the course of mefloquine use. It has been reported that dizziness or vertigo, tinnitus and hearing impairment, and loss of balance may continue for months after discontinuation of the drug and may be permanent in some cases.

More severe neuropsychiatric disorders have been reported such as: sensory and motor neuropathies (including paresthesia, tremor and ataxia), convulsions, agitation or restlessness, anxiety, depression, mood swings, panic attacks, memory impairment, confusion, hallucinations, aggression, psychotic or paranoid reactions and encephalopathy. Cases of suicidal ideation and suicide have been reported.
Acute and long-term psychiatric side effects of mefloquine: A follow-up on Danish adverse event reports

Åsa Ringqvist a,b,*, Per Bech c,d, Birte Glenthøj d,e, Eskild Petersen f

Table 5  Subjects’ estimation of duration of physical symptoms, nightmares, cognitive dysfunction, and symptoms in response to mefloquine in the SCL-90-R. The study population consisted of 73 cases reported for adverse side effects to mefloquine.

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<th>Cases indicating symptoms</th>
<th>1–2 days</th>
<th>3 days – 3 weeks</th>
<th>1–3 months</th>
<th>4–8 months</th>
<th>9 months – 3 years</th>
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<td>Cognitive dysfunction</td>
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<td>SCL-90-R</td>
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 “…It is also important to point out that the mefloquine-induced brain stem injury revealed by silver staining is permanent in nature…. ”

Acute/Subacute Intoxication

Prodrome
Vivid Dreams, Malaise
Sleep Disturbance,
Nightmares, Personality Change, Disinhibition,
“Anxiety,
Depression, Restlessness or Confusion”, Mania,
Psychosis, Disorientation,
Amnesia, Neurological Symptoms

Chronic Toxidrome

Chronic Neurological Symptoms, Behavioral, Mood, and Cognitive Changes

Time

Severity
Veterans and Law Enforcement

- Veterans courts
- Training police officers about PTSD
The Crisis Intervention Officer Program

- A forty-hour training for law enforcement officers
  - Basic info. about mental illnesses, recognizing signs and symptoms; public mental health system and local laws
  - Verbal de-escalation training and role-plays
  - Site visits to provider agencies & hospitals
  - Graduation and certification as a CIO (pin)

2013 CIO of the Year – M. Pulliam
Schools and Veterans

Increasing number of Veterans organizations in schools
Women at War reviews the epidemiology, changes in policy, and demographics of women in the services; the factors affecting their health and health care while serving in austere environments; issues related to reproductive and urogenital health; and how health care providers can help prepare and prevent illness.
Special Issues for Female Soldiers

• Deployment Health
  – Urinary tract infections
  – Dehydration
  – Menstruation
• Reproductive
  – Pregnancy
  – Breastfeeding
• Musculoskeletal
  – Stress fractures
• Psychological reactions
• Sexual assault
Deployment Health

• Genito-urinary issues
  – Lack of clean bathrooms
  – Bombs by the side of the road
  – Fluid restriction
  – Dehydration

• Menstruation
  – Regulating
  – Suppressing

• Birth control
Reproductive Issues

• Pregnancy
  – Physical training
  – Deployment
  – Exposure to toxins

• Breast-feeding
  – Maintenance of breast feeding
  – Exposure to petroleum products
Musculoskeletal issues

- Heavy personal equipment
  - Kevlar helmets
  - Body armour
- Stress fractures
  - Pelvic
- Personal strength
Psychological Issues

- Stressors of deployment
- Balancing family and deployment
- Combat
- Military sexual assault
Psychological Reactions to Sexual Assault

- Shame
- Guilt
- Loneliness
- Secrecy
- “Rape-syndrome”
- “Accommodation-syndrome”.
Questions/Discussion
Back-Up Slides