

Combat Trauma More Toxic Than Civilian Trauma

Compared with 8 types of civilian trauma, combat trauma is 3-50 times more likely to lead to Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in men according to a recent study by VISN 1 MIRECC Investigators Holly Prigerson, Paul Maciejewski and Robert Rosenheck. This study compared the impact of different kinds of trauma on 1703 men from a representative national survey of over 5000 community residents. PTSD symptoms following combat exposure were more likely to emerge only after a delay. Combat exposure also led to greater risk for being unemployed, fired, divorced and physically abusive to a spouse. The investigators suggest that combat trauma is highly toxic because it is repeated, sustained and unlikely to be psychologically processed right away. For combat veterans, survival may have required undivided attention to the current situation, allowing no time to try to make sense of what was happening.