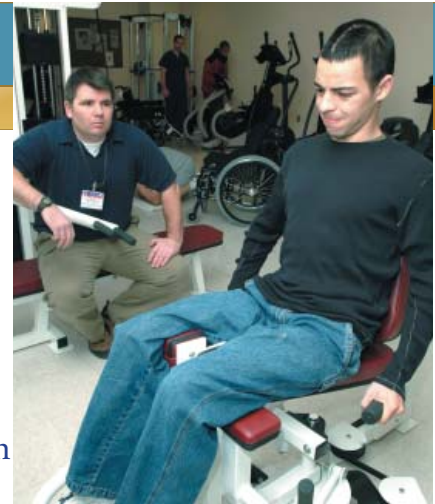




Afghanistan/Iraq

VA's Office of Research & Development has implemented a comprehensive research agenda to address the deployment-related health issues of the newest generation of veterans—those returning from operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF). In addition to exploring new treatments for traumatic brain injury and other complex blast-related injuries, VA researchers are examining ways to improve the delivery of health care services for these veterans.



Examples of VA research advances

- **New center to study war injuries**—The recently established Center of Excellence for Research on Returning War Veterans, based at the Central Texas Veterans Health Care System, will study brain and mental-health conditions common among troops returning from OEF/OIF. These conditions include post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, depression, and substance abuse.
- **Protecting against brain trauma**—In lab experiments, VA investigators demonstrated that intravenous infusion of adult-derived bone-marrow stem cells may protect against brain trauma. The findings may lead to the development of early, cell-based interventions to limit the damage from traumatic injuries to the brain or spinal cord.
- **Promoting gold-standard polytrauma care**—VA Research has established a Polytrauma and Blast-Related Injury Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (PT/BRI QUERI) coordinating center to promote consistent state-of-the-art medical and rehabilitation care across VA's network of polytrauma centers, which care for veterans with complex, multiple injuries.
- **Peer visitation for polytrauma patients**—A researcher at the Puget Sound VA is collaborating with the Amputee Coalition of America (ACA) to develop a peer-visitation program to help veterans recovering from polytrauma. The ACA has successfully implemented a similar program at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Facts About Deployment Health

The changing nature of warfare poses new challenges to VA's health care system. Due to improved body armor and battlefield medicine, many troops are surviving injuries that in the past would have been fatal. These soldiers, however, are returning home with complex, multiple injuries. These "polytrauma" cases often include brain and spinal cord injuries, vision and hearing loss, nerve damage, burns, amputations, musculoskeletal injuries, infections, and emotional adjustment problems. As of April 2007, VA had treated more than 350 OEF/OIF veterans as inpatients in its polytrauma system of care, which includes four main centers and 17 network sites located at VA facilities around the country.

