



Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress

Background

Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress (CSTS) has been at the forefront of research focusing on the psychological effects and health consequences of exposure to traumatic events arising from war, disasters, terrorism and public health threats. CSTS, part of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) and its department of psychiatry, is a center of **Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury** (DCoE). Through these collaborations, CSTS brings scholarly and research-oriented problem solving to the psychological health concerns of the Defense Department and the nation.

The center's advances in neuroscience are aimed at improving the psychological health, resiliency and post-deployment functioning of service members by identifying biomarkers and other genetic components involved in post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and suicide. Additionally, the center seeks to discover new treatments to prevent and eradicate PTSD symptoms and improve the psychological health and resiliency of military families. The center continues to address evolving trauma care and communication needs, including those associated with deployment, combat injury and parental loss.

Purpose

Today and into the future, CSTS is uniquely positioned to respond to Defense Department mission-relevant activities and issues, especially those pertaining to DCoE. CSTS seeks to educate regional and national stakeholders in government, industry, health care, public health and academia on mitigating the effects of disaster and trauma in the civilian population to foster human continuity, community and national resilience.

History

CSTS was established in 1987 as a center of excellence for responding to the long-term concerns of the Defense Department over the substantial health risks resulting from the traumatic impact of:

- the possibility, or actual use, of weapons of mass destruction during combat, acts of terrorism or hostage events
- combat, peacemaking, peacekeeping and non-combat situations
- natural disasters, such as hurricanes, tornadoes or floods
- more common stress producing events, such as physical assaults and motor vehicle, shipboard or airplane accidents in both the uniformed and civilian communities

The center has been uniquely attuned and responsive to our nation's trauma history encompassing events of national and international impact such as 9/11, the anthrax attacks, major hurricanes and H1N1. CSTS has been involved in responses to nearly every disaster that has faced the nation in the past 25 years. In response to 9/11, the center provided consultation to the U.S. Congress, Departments of State and Transportation, Fortune 100 companies and government leaders on workplace preparedness for terrorism.

CSTS also provides trusted educational resources, often in real time, to assist health care providers, first responders, organizations and affected populations who have been or continue to be exposed to traumatic events and experiences. **Courage to Care**, an electronic campaign

on timely topics of military health, is a valued resource for military health leadership, providers and military families who experience the effects of deployments, war injuries and the challenges of parenting under stress. A more recent campaign, **Courage to Care, Courage to Talk**, educates health care providers and military families about the importance of injury communication to improve the provision of care and family resilience. Additionally, CSTS scientists and clinicians disseminate knowledge through presentations at national and international scientific conferences, through participation in professional and academic review boards and by chairing committees that influence the policy and practice of trauma and disaster care.

Activities

- Develops and carries out research programs to extend our knowledge of the medical and psychiatric consequences of war, deployment, trauma, disaster and terrorism, including weapons of mass destruction
- Educates and trains health care providers, leaders, individuals and public and private agencies on how to prevent, mitigate and respond to the negative consequences of war, deployment, traumatic events, disasters and terrorism
- Consults with private and government agencies on medical care of trauma victims, their families and communities and recovery following traumatic events, disasters and terrorism
- Maintains an archive on medical literature related to the health consequences of traumatic events, disasters and terrorism on individuals, families, organizations and communities

- Provides opportunities for post-doctoral training of medical scientists to respond to and research the health consequences of trauma, disaster and terrorism
- Provides detailed **fact sheets** to service members, veterans, family members, health care providers and the public

The Future

As a DCoE center, CSTS is well-positioned to contribute to the improved psychological health and strength of the military community through its cutting edge research in neuroscience and as a knowledge center for the psychological implications of combat and service to our nation. The center will continue bridging the principles and practice of military and disaster psychiatry to strengthen our nation's health, public health planning and response to local, regional and national disasters and traumatic events.

CSTS Resources

- **Courage to care series:** Addresses health issues of the military family
- **Resources for families:** Addresses the impact of trauma and disasters on families
- **For children:** Provides resources on helping children who may be dealing with difficult events
- **Post-traumatic stress disorder**
- **Terrorism**
- **Resources for providers**
- **Resources for service members**
- **Military related resources**

“CSTS continues to grow and expand its research, education and consultation in the domains of disaster psychiatry, the neuroscience of traumatic stress, understanding and support of first responders and care of our nation's service members who experience high stress operations on behalf of our nation's security.”

— Dr. Robert J. Ursano, CSTS director