Website Editorial Policy

The Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE) Public Affairs Office (PAO) supports the centers' mission by creating and posting news articles, features and other content related to the mission on the DCoE website. The goals of this content are to build awareness of DCoE and our resources among government and military thought leaders; to help disseminate DCoE products widely among health care providers, service members, veterans, family members, caregivers and the public; and to acquaint health care providers with advances in treatment for psychological health and traumatic brain injury, particularly with regard to the military.

As a Defense Department organization, DCoE strives to be impartial and honest, communicate evidence-based content, achieve the highest standards of accuracy and avoid knowingly or materially misleading its audiences. It avoids conflicts of interest and the appearance of endorsements.

Articles posted on the DCoE website are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Defense Department or DCoE. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of DCoE/PAO.

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The following editorial policy applies to all website content:

Although DCoE/PAO creates most content, we welcome suggestions for articles and article submissions including opinion columns or blogs written by subject matter experts.

1. Through DCoE blog posts, news articles and other content, DCoE director and subject-matter experts communicate timely and relevant information about psychological health- and traumatic brain injury (TBI)-related issues. The director normally defers decisions on news propriety, story placement, publication date, and use of photography to DCoE/PAO. Often, coordination with DCoE subject matter experts and or leadership is required as a story is developed. For more specifics re: the review, edit and approval process, please see below.

2. News and editorial content provides information to all stakeholders to enhance the effectiveness of the DCoE mission and improve the lives of service members, veterans, their

families and caregivers. DCoE/PAO drafts stories of significance to our audiences that widen awareness of psychological health- and TBI-related resources and information, and publicize programs, services and support offered by partner organizations.

3. DCoE is a resource for officers, enlisted members, civilian employees, veterans, family members, retirees and reservists and Guardsmen. We write content to highlight DCoE resources in a conversational tone that appeals to a wide audience and encourages them to read articles to the end.

4. DCoE also provides timely and relevant information to military and civilian medical providers who treat service members, veterans and others with psychological health challenges or with TBI. Content can inform providers of resources available from DCoE to help with prevention, treatment and recovery related to psychological health and TBI, and highlights information on the latest clinical research in these areas. This "news you can use" content is more technical and may include medical terminology. However, we strive to create content that is appealing, useful and easy to read.

5. Accuracy is not simply a matter of getting facts right. If an issue is controversial, relevant opinions and facts may need careful consideration. Relevant facts and information, including the opinions of experts in the field, are weighed in the best interest of our audience and the Defense Department. Writers gather material using credible sources; check and cross-check facts; validate the authenticity of documentary evidence and digital material; and corroborate claims and allegations made by contributors wherever possible. Lack of scientific consensus is noted.

6. We work to provide fresh, unique content not previously published elsewhere. As a public domain, DCoE content may be republished by the general public. When this occurs, we graciously request our content is credited.

7. Online articles reflect the website policies of Defense Department (DoD), Army Medicine, the Military Health System and DCoE, and are in the interest of our audience and the government. Blog posts, including those containing opinion, should help readers understand Defense Department, MHS and DCoE policies and programs. They must not include (or imply) criticism of other government agencies, nor advocate or dispute specific political, diplomatic or legislative matters. DCoE does not publish statements or articles on legislative matters by people or agencies outside the government, including officials or candidates for public office.

8. DCoE news coverage and content conforms to the editorial policies of the Defense Department, MHS and DCoE. We strive to keep our news reporting factual and objective. News coverage will avoid morbid, sensational or alarming details not necessary for accurate news reporting. News writing will distinguish between fact and opinion. When an opinion is expressed, the source is identified. DCoE does not publish commercial news or editorials.

9. Content on the DCoE website conforms to applicable regulations and laws relating to libel and copyright, the Privacy Act of 1974, and to federal printing and postal regulations.

Specific Publication Guidelines for Subject Matter Experts Working with the PAO team:

DCoE/PAO welcomes suggestions for articles and accepts article submissions, including opinion columns or blogs, written by or with the support of our subject matter experts. When articles are written with the assistance of subject matter experts, the following guidelines apply:

- Deadlines: To ensure timely publication, submit article idea or copy at least 30 days in advance of publication (articles are scheduled using the DCoE Editorial Calendar). Specific timelines are coordinated with the DCoE/PAO editor and subject matter experts. Ample time is required for the formal review and coordination of any content.
- Review: We will work with subject matter experts to ensure the material in articles is accurate and evidence-based. Editorial changes are made at the discretion of DCoE/PAO, while subject-matter experts determine that technical information is accurate.
- Revision and rewriting: Questions related to source material and accuracy of content, or other matters, should be addressed as soon as possible. If necessary, DCoE/PAO may rewrite copy to ensure it adheres to current guidelines defined by The Associated Press Stylebook and the DCoE Style Guide. Submissions may be trimmed to an appropriate length to facilitate layout and design.
- Length. Articles can range from 400 to 2,500 words in length.
- Photographs and other Images. Graphics, photographs and videos are considered part of content and in some cases may replace written content. Visual material is especially useful in clinical articles. Please provide any visual content with the story submission, including photographs, tables, charts or graphics. All photos must adhere to DoD guidelines and have a proper credit and captioning, including photos courtesy of the Defense Department or services. Those from outside sources must include a photo caption and give credit as appropriate and require permission to publish them via writing (an email is acceptable). We may reject photos for publication for several reasons. Photos we routinely reject include: award presentations, ribbon cuttings, posed group photos, retirement/reenlistment photos, photos containing controlled area badges, or poor quality photos.
- Section 508. All digital content must comply with Section 508 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act, which ensures all electronic and online material is accessible to persons with disabilities. DCoE/PAO will verify compliance with the DCoE Section 508 officer and coordinate any necessary changes.
- Links. Contributors are encouraged to include hyperlinks to relevant content to verified military, academic and government sites as appropriate. DCoE does not link to commercial sites.
- Replies. In today's online world, our goal is to foster a two-way conversation with our audience. DCoE online channels allow users to share comments to blogs, articles and social media posts. Writers should prepare to work closely with the DCoE/PAO team to formally respond to comments during the first two weeks after an article is posted. DCoE/PAO will forward comments to writers and help craft replies as necessary.
- Approval and Placement: DCoE/PAO is the approval authority on story approval and placement. Additionally, DCoE/PAO routinely shares website content across other online platforms, such as social media (i.e. Twitter, Facebook) and GovDelivery.

- Formal Coordination: PAO will facilitate website content with other federal agencies as necessary. Controversial or sensitive articles are coordinated with the DCoE director and higher headquarters, when necessary, before publication. Changes to content are made when directed by the DCoE/PAO director or DCoE director.

Kathleen Taylor
DCoE Public Affairs Director

Mike Colston, MD
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DCoE Director

References:
- DCoE website
- DCoE social media
- DCoE Style Guide (Available upon request via email)
- DCoE Resource Catalog online
- Associated Press Style Guide (online version)
- DoD Instruction 5040.02, "Visual Information (VI)," Oct. 27, 2011 online
- Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, "DoD Captioning Style Guide," Oct. 28, 2013 online
- DoD Section 508 Compliance website
- DoD Instruction 5400.13, "Public Affairs (PA) Operations," Oct. 15, 2008 online
- DoD Instruction 5120.04, "DoD Newspapers, Magazines, Guides, and Installation Maps," March 17, 2015 online