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## Study: 300,000 vets have depression or PTSD

By Pauline Jelinek - The Associated Press  
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WASHINGTON — Three hundred thousand U.S. troops are suffering from major depression or post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of serving in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and 320,000 received brain injuries, a new study estimates.

Only about half have sought treatment, said the study released Thursday by the RAND Corp.

"There is a major health crisis facing those men and women who have served our nation in Iraq and Afghanistan," said Terri Tanielian, the project's co-leader and a researcher at the nonprofit RAND.

"Unless they receive appropriate and effective care for these mental health conditions, there will be long-term consequences for them and for the nation," she said in an interview with The Associated Press.

The 500-page study is the first large-scale, private assessment of its kind — including a survey of 1,965 service members across the country, from all branches of the armed forces and including those still in the military as well as veterans who have left the services.

Its results appear consistent with a number of mental health reports from within the government, though the Defense Department has not released the number of people it has diagnosed or who are being treated for mental problems. The Department of Veterans Affairs said this month that its records show about 120,000 who served in the two wars and are no longer in the military have been diagnosed with mental health problems. Of the 120,000, about 60,000 are receiving PTSD treatment, VA said.

VA is responsible for care of service members after they have left the service, while the Defense Department covers active-duty and reservist needs. The lack of information from the Pentagon was one motivation for the RAND study, Tanielian said.

The most prominent and detailed military study on mental health that is released is the Army's survey of soldiers at the warfront. Officials said last month that its most recent one, done last fall, found 18.2 percent of soldiers suffered a mental health problem such as depression, anxiety or acute stress in 2007 compared with 20.5 percent the previous year.

The Rand study, completed in January, put the percentage of PTSD and depression at 18.5 percent, calculating that about 300,000 current and former service members were suffering from those problems at the time of its survey.

The figure is based on Pentagon data that show more than 1.6 million military personnel have deployed to the conflicts since the war in Afghanistan began in late 2001.

RAND researchers also found:

- About 19 percent, or 320,000 service members, reported that they experienced a possible traumatic brain injury while deployed. In wars where blasts from roadside bombs are prevalent, the injuries can range from mild concussions to severe head wounds.
- About 7 percent reported a probable brain injury and current PTSD or major depression.
- Only 43 percent reported ever having been evaluated by a physician for their head injuries.
- Only 53 percent of service members with PTSD or depression sought help during the past year.
- They gave various reasons for not getting help, including that they worried about the side effects of medication; believe family and friends could help them with the problem; or that they feared seeking care might damage their careers.
- Rates of PTSD and major depression were highest among women and reservists.

The report is titled "Invisible Wounds of War: Psychological and Cognitive Injuries, Their Consequences, and Services to Assist Recovery." It was sponsored by a grant from the California Community Foundation and done by 25 researchers from RAND Health and the RAND National Security Research Division, which also has done work under contracts with the Pentagon and other defense agencies as well as allied foreign governments and foundations.

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