

Military uses Skype, other tech to reach injured servicemembers

- By FederalDaily Staff
- Jun 29, 2010

Injured servicemembers may be reluctant to talk about combat stress with a military psychiatrist, but they are more willing to chat about their problems through Skype or other consumer-based technologies, military and veterans officials told lawmakers.

The Senate Armed Services Committee held a hearing in June on military suicides and efforts to improve the delivery of mental health care to combat veterans. Witnesses said using a consumer-based technology such as Skype is useful because it is a medium servicemembers — particularly younger troops — are familiar with. In addition, it is accessible to members who are not on active duty and are often widely dispersed and hard to reach.

“One of the challenges in preventing suicide is recognizing that an individual may need help,” testified Gen. Peter W. Chiarelli, Army vice chief of staff. “Too often individuals will suffer in silence. They may be dealing with severe depression or anxiety and choose to hide their concerns from family members or friends.

“This generation sometimes opens up much better through Skype” and other digital technology “than by sitting across the table” from a mental health care provider, Chiarelli told the committee, according to the American Forces Press Service.

Military officials told the panel that each of the services has implemented a new range of programs to reach out to troops and their families on mental health issues, such as traumatic brain injuries, post traumatic stress disorder and suicide prevention. All of the services have increased awareness training, starting with new recruits, officials said.

To see more, go to: www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123210510 or http://armed-services.senate.gov/e_witnesslist.cfm?id=4642 (hearing).



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