



Military better at treating brain injuries

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 22 (UPI) -- U.S. military physicians say they are breaking new ground in identifying and treating traumatic brain injuries and mental health issues.

Dr. David Williamson, medical director for the Inpatient Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury program at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., and staff say roadside bombs and other blasts cause physical changes in the brain and how it functions, the Department of Defense reports.

"When you are in a blast, there are actually neuron-cognitive changes that occur in how the brain and the synapses and the brain connections -- the wiring of the brain -- actually work," said.

Vice Adm. Adam M. Robinson Jr., the U.S. Navy surgeon general says except in the case of severe traumatic brain injury -- involving a penetrating head wound -- these wounds can be difficult to diagnose and symptoms often aren't immediate.

"When you break your arm, I can do an X-ray and can show you the break," Robinson says. "We have finally, as a military and as a medical service -- Army, Navy and Air Force -- come to grips with the fact that war creates injuries that are not seen, injuries that are just as life-changing and as devastating as amputations and other physical injuries that come back."

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