



# Afghanistan/Iraq

VA's Office of Research and Development has implemented a comprehensive research agenda to address the deployment-related health issues of the newest generation of Veterans—those returning from Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF). In addition to exploring new treatments for traumatic brain injury and other complex blast-related injuries, VA researchers are examining ways to improve the delivery of health care services for these Veterans.



## *Examples of VA Research Advances*

**VA, DoD aim to improve burn outcomes** – Researchers from VA and the Department of Defense are working together to examine long-term outcomes among OEF/OIF Veterans with serious burn injuries. The researchers, based at the San Antonio VA and Brooke Army Medical Center, will assess patients at discharge from the hospital and then yearly for four years. They'll administer a wide array of questionnaires covering physical, psychological and social issues, with the aim of improving care and services for this population of Veterans.

**Study suggests rise in wars' mental toll** – Among nearly 290,000 veterans of operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom who used VA health care for the first time between April 2002 and March 2008, 37 percent received a mental-health diagnosis. That was the main result of a recently published database study by a team with VA and the University of California, San Francisco. An earlier study by the same group looked at nearly 104,000 OEF/OIF veterans first seen in VA between 2001 and 2005 and found that 25 percent received at least one mental health diagnosis.

**Consortium will study PTSD, brain injury** – A psychiatrist with VA and the University of California, San Diego, is leading a \$60-million, five-year, multisite consortium funded by the Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury Research Program of the Department of Defense to study PTSD and traumatic brain injury. The research effort will pay special attention to the interaction between the two conditions.

## Facts About Deployment Health

The changing nature of warfare poses new challenges to VA's health care system. Due to improved body armor and battlefield medicine, many troops are surviving injuries that in the past would have been fatal. These soldiers, however, are returning home with complex, multiple injuries. These "polytrauma" cases often include brain and spinal cord injuries, vision and hearing loss, nerve damage, burns, amputations, musculoskeletal injuries, infections, and emotional adjustment problems. As of the end of 2008, VA had treated 641 OEF/OIF Veterans who were injured in theater as inpatients at its four main polytrauma clinics. The VA polytrauma system of care also includes network sites and support teams around the nation ([www.polytrauma.va.gov](http://www.polytrauma.va.gov)).

