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News Release

Injury Severity Is Possible Risk for PTSD, Depression

BETHESDA, Md. – The first study to focus on U.S. soldiers seriously wounded or injured during combat in Iraq or Afghanistan and states that injury severity may predict the risk for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression, has been published in the October 2006 issue of *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, the official journal of the American Psychiatric Association.

The study written by Thomas A. Grieger, M.D., and colleagues at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and Walter Reed Army Institute of Research is titled, “Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Depression in Battle-Injured Soldiers.”

The study found that a soldiers’ personal rating of their own physical problems, in contrast to objective measures of injury severity by medical personnel, were more significantly associated with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) later.

The emotional impact of injury deepens in the first year after evacuation from combat. The presence of PTSD or depression seven months after a soldier was seriously injured was associated with the severity of the physical problem one month after the actual injury. These findings came from the screening of more than 600 soldiers, who were the most severely wounded of those receiving combat injuries from March 2003 to September 2004. Of those soldiers, 243 completed assessments at the one, four, and seven month time frame after being injured. The rates of PTSD and depression were 4 percent at one month, 12 percent at four months, and 19 percent at seven months.

Established by the U.S. Congress in 1972, the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (www.usuhs.mil) is located on the campus of the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., and is the nation’s only federal school of medicine, including a graduate program in the biomedical sciences and graduate school of nursing.

Information for this release was obtained from the American Psychiatric Association. For more information, call the Office of External Affairs at (301) 295-9475.