



US DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

BLAST INJURY RESEARCH PROGRAM COORDINATING OFFICE

Therapy Development for TBI and Related Symptoms Mental Health Outcomes: Concussion Clinics in Afghanistan

mTBI continues to be a common injury in the current Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts and over 90 percent of mTBIs are blast related. In addition, these injuries are associated with long-term mental health outcomes such as PTSD and PCS. The NHRC used the EMED to analyze records of 620 Service Members diagnosed with combat mTBI and who experienced a loss of consciousness. Of the 620 Service Members, 531 received care at a concussion clinic at a medical treatment facility in Afghanistan and 89 received standard concussion care at a medical treatment facility in Afghanistan. NHRC found the demographics of the two treatment cohorts were similar in terms of mean age, gender, military occupation, and branch of Service. A greater proportion of Service Members receiving concussion rehabilitation clinic care returned to duty after treatment (53.3 percent versus 29.5 percent), with fewer requiring light duty or evacuation (40.6 percent versus 57.9 percent and 6.0 percent versus 12.5 percent, respectively). Within one year post-injury, PTSD and PCS diagnoses were reported less frequently in Service Members who received concussion rehabilitation clinic care compared with Service Members who received standard care (20.7 percent versus 31.5 percent and 9.2 percent versus 32.6 percent, respectively). In this NHRC report, the type of in-theater concussion care may influence both return to duty and mental health outcomes in Service Members who have experienced a combat-related concussion. A higher proportion of return to duty dispositions and a lower proportion of evacuations from theater were seen in Service Members receiving concussion rehabilitation care in Afghanistan. In addition, a lower proportion of both PTSD and PCS diagnoses within one year post-injury were documented in Service Members receiving concussion rehabilitation care.