



US DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

BLAST INJURY RESEARCH PROGRAM COORDINATING OFFICE

Extremity Trauma Rehabilitation and Treatment Promoting Adherence among Outpatients in Physical Rehabilitation Programs

Researchers at the Center for Rehabilitation Sciences Research (CRSR) at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) conducted ethnographic interviews with former US Armed Forces Amputee Patient Care Program patients to understand their experiences when returning to duty and/or the civilian community following limb loss and/or limb salvage. The purpose of this ethnographic, or qualitative, study was to learn, using the concepts and frameworks of the research participants, about the experience of returning to life in the community after undergoing rehabilitative care for traumatic limb-loss. Thus far, researchers have learned that nearly all participants have attended some form of education or vocational retraining and have entered into the workforce; however, those who have not attended education or vocational retraining continue to confront health challenges associated with their injuries. In terms of personal relationships, nearly all participants report participating in, or having had, long-term relationships. Finally, Service Members noted that high technology prosthetics promoted confidence during rehabilitation and that focusing on athleticism during outpatient care prepared them to leave the program in excellent physical condition making community living easier. Former patients also attributed working alongside similarly injured peers and having regular contact with their whole treatment team as the foundation of their self-described successes. By understanding the post-injury experiences of former Service Members, researchers are able to advise on how to refine rehabilitation programs to make them even more effective.

