

Iraq troops' PTSD rate as high as 35 percent, says new study

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The Veterans' Administration should expect a high volume of Iraq veterans seeking treatment of post traumatic stress disorder, with researchers anticipating that the rate among armed forces will be as high as 35%, according to the Management Insights feature in the current issue of *Management Science*, the flagship journal of the Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences (INFORMS).

Management Insights, a regular feature of the journal, is a digest of important research in business, management, operations research, and management science. It appears in every issue of the monthly journal.

"A Dynamic Model for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Among U.S. Troops in Operation Iraqi Freedom" is by Michael P. Atkinson of the Naval Postgraduate School and Adam Guetz and Lawrence M. Wein of Stanford University.

The tempo of deployment cycles in the Iraq War is higher than for any war since World War II, the authors write, and military survey data suggest that posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is common among service members.

To assure ample mental health resources to care for returning troops, the authors argue that it is important for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to forecast the timing and number of new PTSD cases over the coming years, which is complicated by the fact that many cases have delayed onset.

The authors combine a dynamic mathematical operations research model with deployment data and PTSD data from the Iraq War, and estimate that the PTSD rate among Iraq War veterans will be approximately 35%, which is roughly double the rate from the raw survey data. This doubling is due to the time lag between the PTSD-generating event and the onset of symptoms and to the fact that many surveyed troops will do subsequent deployments.

Consequently, the authors write, the VA system, which is already experiencing significant delays for PTSD treatment provision, urgently needs to ramp up its [mental health](#) resource capacity.

The current issue of Management Insights is available at <http://mansci.journal.informs.org/cgi/reprint/55/9/iv>.

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