

Challenges of soldier rehabilitation and reintegration need closer attention

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Veterans returning from combat often face a multitude of challenges: Debilitating physical and psychological conditions, a civil society that does not support and even actively criticizes the war from which the soldiers have returned, or personal and family circumstances that changed while they were away. These and many other factors can create a situation in which veterans are unable to reintegrate into civilian life as they had planned and hoped. In a special issue of *WORK: A Journal of Prevention, Assessment & Rehabilitation*, authors, many of whom are veterans themselves, present a wide-ranging view of the environment and treatment options for returning soldiers.

Guest Editor Rebecca Wolf, JD, MPH, formerly of the Harvard Law School Project on Disability and currently at Northern Arizona University, noted, "After returning from combat, rehabilitation and reintegration into civilian life are paramount to veterans' long-term healing and lifelong success. This special issue of *WORK* addresses the challenges that soldiers and veterans face in their rehabilitation and reintegration and offers solutions to this important transition in their lives."

The issue presents a broad scope of challenges and solutions from a diverse group of internationally acclaimed researchers from a wide array of disciplines.

A personal narrative by H.S. Kraft, a clinical psychologist in the U.S. Navy, paints a detailed picture of the wartime experiences that many

soldiers face. As background, S.L. Wilcox and colleagues describe the military workplace culture, providing context for readers who are not familiar with this culture.

The challenges that veterans face include preventable deaths, gender-related stress, and disability. M.S. Gallaway and colleagues investigated preventable deaths among U.S. Army soldiers assigned to a rehabilitative Warrior Transition Unit (WTU). They found that the unique design and operation of the WTUs as environments focused on treatment and rehabilitation provide both benefits and challenges to recovery and risk mitigation.

E. Huss and J. Cwikel provide a gendered perspective and discuss women's stress in compulsory army service in Israel. They found that coping styles for women were distinct from men's styles. C.L. Griffin, Jr., and M.A. Stein showed how veterans minimize their self-perception of disability and how this can prevent them from obtaining assistance with future employment. T. Araten-Bergman, P. Tal-Katz and M.A. Stein address the question of whether employment status matters for psychosocial adjustment of Israeli veterans with disabilities.

Reintegration into civilian life must be faced by all veterans. S.L. Wilcox and colleagues identify post-deployment reintegration challenges in a National Guard unit and found that 30% had relationship or family reintegration challenges. Continuing on the topic of the unique challenges faced by soldier-citizens in the National Guard, J. Griffith examines re-employment and financial stresses of returning Army National Guard soldiers.

Traumatic brain injury is one of the signature injuries from the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. C. Linstad and D.J. Schafer tell the compelling story of one veteran's eight-year journey to reclaim his life and obtain community employment after surviving a severe brain injury.

Six contributions discuss a variety of treatment options for rehabilitation and reintegration of veterans. P. Zimmermann and co-authors evaluated an inpatient preventive treatment program for German soldiers returning from deployment. M.M.P. Zeylemaker, F.H.H. Linn, and E. Vermetten discuss a functional rehabilitation program for Dutch soldiers with multiple unexplained physical symptoms (MUPS).

J-D. Collins and co-authors reviewed the literature concerning the use and effectiveness of computer-assisted rehabilitation environments for research and rehabilitation of wounded warriors. K.W. Sullivan and colleagues evaluated the challenges facing the use of computer-based, cognitive rehabilitation methods in a military treatment facility.

M.A. Bosco and co-investigators describe the symptomatic, functional and systemic challenges inherent to post-deployment multi-symptom disorder (PMD) treatment, using three case studies that show that vocational rehabilitation services are an integral component of PMD treatment. G. Wolbring and co-authors explored discourse surrounding therapeutic enhancement of veterans and soldiers with injuries.

Rounding out the issue, S. Westlund describes four veterans who found that experiencing nature in various ways was helpful in their post-conflict recovery.

Dr. Wolf expressed her hopes that "this special issue inspires others to pursue scholarship, promote policymaking and increase dialogue about potential solutions to [challenges](#) that [soldiers](#) and [veterans](#) face in their [rehabilitation](#) and reintegration processes."

More information: Guest Editorial: "Soldier Rehabilitation," Rebecca Wolf, iospress.metapress.com/content/.../0718223/fulltext.pdf

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