

Military

Symposium will address 'Hidden Casualties of War'

Renee Bostany

News Journal correspondent

In an effort to address the mental health needs of the military community in Pensacola, health-care providers from the Deployment Health and Wellness Clinic at Pensacola's Naval Hospital and faculty members from the University of West Florida's Department of Psychology have organized a health symposium to promote healing and resiliency for U.S. armed service members and their families.

"Hidden Casualties of War" will be at the UWF's Center for Fine & Performing Arts on May 8 and 9. Local civilian and military health professionals seek to bring awareness to the psychologically wounded as well as the physically wounded veterans.

The symposium will provide a clearinghouse of community resources and services, as well as share knowledge and education about the trickle-down psychological ramifications of war.

The symposium will include a review of the deployment cycle and its impact on the psychological health of military personnel and their families. Nationally recognized experts will discuss evaluation and treatment strategies.

Dr. David Dean, clinical psychologist with Pensacola's Naval Hospital Department of Deployment Health and Wellness, said that the problems and issues concerning the deployment cycle will be the pre-eminent topic. "The deployment cycle sets the stage for all the subsequent behaviors. It's a tough time — all the psychological implications as well as the social ramifications for the family and loved ones. Bereavement issues are different," he explained. "The death of a family member



Dean

during deployment is different from a regular death. Families are usually far away from their support system."

War veterans who come home with physical injuries, such as amputated legs or arms, don't necessarily have an easier time adjusting to their altered lives than vets with psychological wounds. But they are not faced with the everyday misunderstandings that the victims of mental and psychological wounds face, according to Dean.

"If you come home with an obvious injury, the explanation for why you might need help is obvious, too," Dean said. "With this war, we are dealing with a different kind of injury in some ways. The use of certain weapons such



U.S. Navy photo

Ensign Jill Skeet administers pain medication to an unidentified Iraqi woman who arrived in Fleet Hospital Three's casualty receiving room. Next week, a health symposium at the University of West Florida will address some of the psychological issues servicemen and servicewomen.

as IEDs (improvised explosive devices) and other explosive devices leads to a different kind of post traumatic stress disorder. People can't see the PTSD wounded. It's hard for them to ever truly relax."

Dean emphasized that many soldiers think needing help with mental or psychological problems is a sign of weakness. He hopes the symposium will help change that perception.

In spring 2007, after the release of a report from a special task force set up by the Department of Defense, the Navy addressed the problems of deployment stress using a broader community approach.

Dean and others from the Naval Hospital coordinated the initial effort with UWF. "I take my hat off to UWF. It's very rare for a university to work so closely with the military in this kind of venture," Dean said.

Providers met once a month to coordinate the topics, speakers, and events for the symposium. Other agenda topics related to the deployment cycle include major depressive disorder, traumatic brain injury, sexual assault, "Helping Children To Be Resilient" and "Counseling Bereaved

Want to go?

- **WHAT:** "Hidden Casualties of War" health symposium
- **WHEN:** 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. May 8 and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. May 9.
- **WHERE:** University of West Florida, Center for Fine and Performing Arts, Building B2, 11000 University Parkway
- **COST:** Registration, \$245; Students are asked to e-mail CAP@uwf.edu.
- **DETAILS:** 474-2914

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Dr. Laura Koppes, UWF chairwoman of the Department of Psychology and co-director of the Center for Applied Psychology, calls the symposium a "wonderful collaborative effort. It's been kind of a confluence of influences and services with the same mission. The consolidation of information will hopefully bring these issues to the forefront — the psychological aspects of deployment and the lingering effect on families."

The symposium is approved for continuing education credits for mental health professionals.