



## **INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE**

### **BOARD ON POPULATION HEALTH AND PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTICE BOARD ON MILITARY AND VETERANS HEALTH**

#### **POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD): A REVIEW**

At the request of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the IOM will conduct work on the subject of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In December, the VA signed a contract with the IOM to convene two separate committees to examine the peer-reviewed literature on PTSD. One committee will review the current scientific and medical literature related to the assessment of PTSD and the validity of screening instruments used to diagnosis PTSD. It will also assess the different treatment approaches and comment on the prognosis of individuals with PTSD. A second committee will provide technical assistance on issues related to compensation of PTSD. Where relevant, recommendations will be made that provide the scientific basis for future policy decisions.

The competence and impartiality of IOM committees determine the quality of the IOM work. Selecting the right committee--one that encompasses the range and depth of expertise needed and one that is balanced so that it can approach its task objectively--is one of the most critical factors in the success of an IOM project. IOM committees are composed of scientists and experts who serve without compensation. Committees are composed to be balanced with regard to expertise and experience, and to assure impartiality and diversity of views. Committee members are carefully screened to avoid bias and conflict of interest. Any unavoidable conflicts are formally determined, and publicly disclosed.

#### **Description of the study and workplan**

##### **Committee 1: PTSD Diagnosis and Treatment**

Specifically related to the assessment and diagnosis of PTSD, the committee will review and comment on the objective measures used in the diagnosis of PTSD and known risk factors for the development of PTSD. The committee will review the utility and objectiveness of the criteria in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV), and will comment on the validity of current screening instruments and their predictive capacity for accurate diagnoses. The committee will also review the literature on various treatment modalities (including pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy) and treatment goals for individuals with PTSD. The committee will also comment on the prognosis of individuals diagnosed with PTSD and existing comorbidities.

**Work Plan:** IOM will use the existing committee on Gulf War and Health: Physiologic, Psychologic, and Psychosocial Effects of Deployment Related Stress to complete the task related to diagnosis and validity of diagnostic instruments and treatment issues. The existing committee will form a subcommittee of PTSD experts to respond to the new statement of task. The

subcommittee will meet separately from the main committee and deliberate; they will work with consultants, and following their deliberations write a short report which will be presented to the main committee for consideration and sign off. The report will undergo external review and following review, the report will be released to the public.

## **Committee 2: Compensation Practices for PTSD**

The second committee will:

1. Review the literature on compensation practices for PTSD including examining the criteria for establishing severity of PTSD as published in the VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities (VASRD);
2. Evaluate the basis for assigning a specific level of compensation to specific severity levels and how changes in the frequency and intensity of symptoms affect compensation practices for PTSD;
3. Assess how compensation practices and reevaluation requirements for PTSD compare with other chronic conditions which have periods of remission and return of symptoms; and
4. Review strategies used to support recovery and return to function in patients with PTSD.

**Work Plan:** An IOM committee of approximately 12 experts will be convened to meet four times during the period of the 12 month study. At the first data gathering meeting which will be open to the public, the sponsor will review the study tasks for the committee and allow discussion to clarify aspects of the implied tasks not explicitly stated in the written study tasks, veteran service organizations will also be invited to attend this open meeting. During subsequent data gathering meetings, the committee will hear from experts both in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and the Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA) about how PTSD cases are adjudicated and learn about VA compensation policies and practices. The committee will hold at least one meeting where veterans and veteran service organizations/associations can make presentations about how their PTSD has been managed by the VA. The emphasis of this meeting will be on understanding attitudes about care and compensation. The committee will review the literature, conduct data gathering meetings, and deliberate; following their deliberations they will write a report that will undergo external review and following review, the report will be released to the public.

For further information email: [gulfwarandhealth@nas.edu](mailto:gulfwarandhealth@nas.edu)

Or visit: [www.iom.edu](http://www.iom.edu); [www.iom.edu/PTSD](http://www.iom.edu/PTSD)