

### **The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is committed to offering Veterans patient-centered and personalized health care. After serving in the military, Veterans may face chronic and complex health issues:**

- Nearly one out of five Veterans returning from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq meet the diagnostic criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as do 30 percent of Vietnam Veterans<sup>1</sup>.
- Department of Defense and the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center estimate that 22 percent of all combat casualties from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan are brain injuries<sup>2</sup>.
- Data from the National Academy of Sciences show that Veterans have double the risk of suicide compared to non-Veteran U.S. adults<sup>3</sup>.

Many Veterans respond well to traditional, evidence-based treatments for medical concerns like suicidal thoughts, PTSD, traumatic brain injury (TBI) and chronic pain. However, there is a smaller group of Veterans who do not. To provide hope and healing to these Veterans, VA explores emerging and innovative approaches to treatment through its Center for Compassionate Care Innovation (CCI).

### **About the Center for Compassionate Care Innovation**

CCI is an entry point for safe and ethical innovations that may be successful in treating a subset of the Veteran population. These men and women have been diagnosed with health conditions that have not responded to evidence-based treatments. The Center explores promising, emerging therapies that focus on suicide prevention, PTSD, TBI and chronic pain. By considering new treatments or novel approaches to existing therapies, CCI enhances Veterans' physical and mental well-being.

CCI receives proposals for emerging therapies through a [proposal submission page](#) on its website. Those who wish to share an innovative clinical treatment that may help Veterans are encouraged to submit ideas. Proposals go through a rigorous review process. Each is critically evaluated for safety and efficacy. Additionally, VA subject matter experts assess the clinical benefits of the potential innovation relative to risk. The key principle to all CCI initiatives is *to do no harm*. Submissions should be safe and ethical, a new idea or innovative application of an existing treatment and enhance Veterans' well-being. They should also be appropriate for adoption within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA).

### **CCI Clinical Demonstrations and Initiatives**

- **Stellate Ganglion Block (SGB) Clinical Demonstration:** SGB involves the application of a local anesthetic to a nerve bundle in the neck to relieve symptoms of PTSD. SGB is a well-established treatment for chronic pain.
- **Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) Clinical Demonstration:** HBOT increases oxygen under raised atmospheric pressure and may be helpful for Veterans with symptoms of PTSD. The therapy has been used since the 1930s to treat decompression sickness from scuba diving and to help wounds heal.

- **Light-emitting Diode (LED) Clinical Demonstration:** Stimulating brain cells with LED headsets may reduce symptoms of TBI. A new application of the therapy allows Veterans to complete LED sessions at home.
- **Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS):** This initiative facilitates greater availability of a therapy that uses high-powered electromagnets to stimulate parts of the brain for Veterans with depression, PTSD and TBI. CCI's contribution has decreased the time needed for each therapy session and increased the number of Veterans who can receive therapy each day.
- **Reconsolidation of Traumatic Memory (RTM):** CCI has worked to more widely offer a specialized technique in psychotherapy for Veterans with PTSD. RTM is available in cooperation with Vet Centers along the East Coast.
- **Mental Health Mobility Service Dog Initiative:** This effort extends the VA veterinary benefits for service dogs belonging to Veterans with mental health concerns that chronically affect mobility.



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*CCI reviews clinical care innovations that may help expand therapy options for some Veterans who have not found relief from traditional treatments.*

CCI is an example of VA's unique approach to health care and of its commitment to offering Veterans the cutting-edge and innovative care they expect and deserve. To learn more about CCI, visit [www.va.gov/healthpartnerships](http://www.va.gov/healthpartnerships). To submit a proposal for a new or innovative treatment, visit <https://www.va.gov/HEALTHPARTNERSHIPS/CCISubmitaProposal.asp>.

<sup>1</sup>Gradus, Jaimie L., DSc, MPH, "Epidemiology of PTSD," <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/PTSD-overview/epidemiological-facts-ptsd.asp>, (March 30, 2017).

<sup>2</sup>Summerall, E. Lanier, MD, MPH, "Traumatic Brain Injury and PTSD: Focus on Veterans," <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/co-occurring/traumatic-brain-injury-ptsd.asp>, (November 6, 2017).

<sup>3</sup>National Academy of Sciences, Evaluation of the Department of Veterans Affairs Mental Health Services: 52.