

# Pain among Veterans of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom

Ronald J. Gironda, PhD,\*† Michael E. Clark, PhD,\*† Jill P. Massengale, ARNP,\* and Robyn L. Walker, PhD\*

\*James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital, Tampa, Florida; †University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida, USA

## ABSTRACT

---

*Objective.* Pain is one of the most frequently reported symptoms by veterans returning from recent overseas military actions. The purpose of the current study was to obtain a preliminary estimate of the prevalence and severity of pain among veterans of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF; N = 970). The demographic, etiologic, and diagnostic characteristics of 100 veterans with moderate to severe chronic pain conditions were examined in order to provide a description of this new group of pain patients.

*Design.* This was a historical cohort study that utilized electronic medical record review for all data collection.

*Patients.* All registered OEF/OIF veterans seeking treatment at a Southeastern Veterans' Affairs medical center were included in the initial cohort. In order to describe the characteristics of those with clinically significant pain, 100 veterans were randomly sampled from the subset of patients who reported moderate to severe chronic pain intensity during a medical visit (N = 219).

*Results.* Approximately 47% of veterans whose charts included pain score documentation (N = 793) reported at least a mild level of current pain. Moderate to severe pain intensity was recorded for 28% (N = 219) of those in the initial cohort with pain scores. Diagnoses of musculoskeletal and connective tissue disorders were recorded for 82% of those with chronic conditions (i.e., duration  $\geq 1$  month).

*Conclusions.* The results of this preliminary study suggest that a substantial percentage of OEF/OIF veterans will experience clinically significant pain following their military service.

*Key Words.* Pain; Epidemiology; Veterans

---