ABOUT TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

• TBI can result from a blow or jolt to the head, such as from an explosion, or from an object penetrating the head.

• TBI can cause changes in consciousness that range from becoming confused to slipping into a coma. The person may also lose memory of the time immediately before or after the event.

• TBI symptoms can include headaches, irritability, poor sleep, memory problems, slower thinking, and depression. These symptoms can persist long-term.

• In one recent survey of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans, nearly 11 percent of women and 20 percent of men screened positive for TBI related to their deployment.

• Most military-related TBIs are considered mild, but even these can involve long-term health effects that significantly impact quality of life.

VA RESEARCH ON TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY: OVERVIEW

• Among the goals of VA researchers working in this field are to shed light on brain changes resulting from TBIs, to improve the ways VA screens Veterans for the injury and diagnoses the condition, and to develop drugs to treat brain injury or limit its seriousness when it first occurs.

• VA researchers are designing better ways to monitor how well treatments work, and developing new ways to support and educate family members of Veterans with TBI.

• VA’s Translational Research Center for TBI and Stress Disorders in Boston studies the impact on Veterans of TBI and PTSD.

• VA’s Brain Rehabilitation Resource Center in Gainesville, Fla., develops and tests treatments to improve or restore motor, thinking, and emotional impairments caused by brain disease or injury.

• VA’s Traumatic Brain Injury Center of Excellence in Houston focuses on mild TBI.

• VA’s War Related Illness and Injury Study Center develops and provides post-deployment health expertise to Veterans and their health care providers through clinical programs, research, education, and risk communication.

• VA’s Polytrauma System of Care is a network of specialized rehabilitation programs dedicated to serving Veterans and service members with TBI and multiple complex, severe injuries, called polytrauma.

• The Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC) serves active-duty military, their beneficiaries, and Veterans with TBI through state-of-the-art clinical care, innovative research and educational programs, and support for force health protection services.

SELECTED MILESTONES AND MAJOR EVENTS

2008 – VA sponsors an international conference on TBI and expands VA research in this area

2012 – VA researchers associate TBI with chronic traumatic encephalopathy, a degenerative disease

2012 – VA begins a study to determine whether TBI and PTSD increase Alzheimer’s risk as Veterans age

2013 – As part of the government’s National Research Action Plan, VA and DoD fund the establishment of new research consortia on TBI and PTSD

RECENT STUDIES: SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS

• Veterans exposed to blasts from bombs, grenades, and other devices may still have brain damage even if they have no symptoms of TBI, according to a study by researchers at VA’s Mid-Atlantic Mental Illness Research Education and

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