



# “WRAIR Forward”

December 2002, NO. 22

This activities report is published by the U.S. Army Medical Research Unit-Europe, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command

## COMMANDER’S CORNER

The Commander, Medical Research and Materiel Command, requested a psychological screening tool be expeditiously transitioned to advanced development for Army-wide implementation for deploying forces. The problem requiring a solution is that during a pre-deployment preparation the Division Psychiatrist has to make a determination of each soldier’s fitness to deploy. The most efficient way to gauge behavior in a large group of people in a short amount of time is to use a survey. The survey under development is built on the psychological screening component of the Joint Medical Surveillance Program in 1996. The current refined survey is based on screening data from over 100,000 war fighters deployed to various regions within the European Command from 1996 to the present. The research-to-date shows that this 10-minute screen can efficiently triage a large group of soldiers to determine referral to a mental health specialist. Further refinement of the screen will be accomplished through linking screening outcome with CHCS and TRAC2ES health utilization databases.

-MAJ James W. Ness

## Debriefing Study: Deployed to Kosovo

Following a pre-deployment data collection in April 2002, the second phase of the debriefing effectiveness study was completed in Kosovo (3 Oct – 5 Nov 02) with the support of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, Kosovo Rotation 4A, and MEDFALCON, the medical task force in Kosovo. The debriefing research team integrated scientists from WRAIR,



**Debriefing Team**  
Front Row: LTC Castro, CPT Thomas, CPT Burrell, MAJ Arincorayan, SGT Breed. Back Row: SFC Pineau, CPT McGurk, MAJ Gerardi, SFC Burlingame

NP (Mission Lead LTC Carl Castro, CPT Lolita Burrell, and CPT Dennis McGurk) and USAMRU-E (CPT Jeffrey Thomas) with clinical support from the 254<sup>th</sup> Combat Stress Control Team (CSC commander MAJ

Arincorayan, MAJ Steven Gerardi, SFC Aaron Burlingame, SGT Robert Breed, and SPC Leonard Pineau). In all, they collected data on 1,050 soldiers, conducting 23 debriefing sessions, 20 stress education classes, and 19 no-intervention comparison groups. The study, designed to assess the impact of psychological debriefing on soldier health and well-being, involved randomly assigning platoons to one of the three study groups [Principal Investigators Dr. Adler, USAMRU-E, and Dr. Litz, Boston Veteran’s Administration]. To that

end, soldiers were also surveyed prior to and immediately after the intervention, heart rate and blood pressure were measured, and 46 soldiers were interviewed briefly about their perceptions of the interventions. A subset of the data were then processed down range and a technical brief was prepared for the Task Force Falcon commander, the Task Force CoS, and his staff, as well as all the company/battery commanders. Follow-up surveys will begin in January 2003. (WRAIR Protocol #862).

Briefings on the Kosovo phase of the study included:

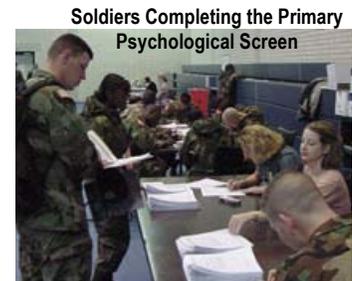
- COL Vangjel, CoS, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division (6 Nov 02)
- COL Jarboe, Commander, WRAIR (7 Nov 02)
- COL West, CoS, ERMCM (13 Nov 02)
- COL Gagliano, Commander, 30<sup>th</sup> MED BDE (16 Dec 02)

## Psych Screening: Covering the Bases

A recent U.S. Army initiative to expand the psychological screening program to all deploying forces resulted in an assessment study to optimize the screening procedures for Army-wide implementation. The screening program, designed to identify soldiers in need of mental health follow-up and provide commanders and their medical personnel with an assessment of the psychological readiness of their units, has been under development since its implementation with troops re-deploying from Bosnia in 1996. As part of the most recent application of the program, 864 soldiers were screened in October 2002 as they prepared to deploy for a six-month peacekeeping rotation to Kosovo. Each soldier completed a primary screen survey comprised of background questions and clinical symptom scales. Analyses of past screening data sets had resulted in a clinical section that included scales assessing depression, anger, relationship and alcohol problems. The primary screen had also been adapted to assess command climate variables in order to determine whether unit-level interventions were required.

In the typical screening procedure, soldiers exceeding cutoff criteria on any of the clinical scales receive a secondary screen, or brief clinical interview, with mental health personnel to determine referral need. However, for this study, all deploying soldiers received a secondary screen interview, not just those exceeding primary screen criteria. This variation in procedure provided information on the content validity of the instrument by determining the degree to which survey content reflected problems experienced by soldiers.

(see related story on p. 2)



**Soldiers Completing the Primary Psychological Screen**

## Psych Screening: Overview of Findings

Overall, the majority of the soldiers screened prior to deployment did not report mental health problems. There were also no content areas identified in the clinical interviews that were not already covered in the primary screen. Furthermore, of the 82 soldiers requiring referral, 75 of them were identified by the screening survey. In addition, all 5 of the soldiers who required immediate referral to determine suitability for deployment exceeded criteria on the primary screen. (WRAIR protocol #889)

Members of the research team for the October 2002 study came from five different organizations. **USAMRU-E:** Dr. Kathleen Wright (mission lead), CPT Jeffrey Thomas, CPL Kaisha Haig, Rachel Prayner, Erica Schroeder, Angela Salvi, Sandra Kelley; **WRAIR NP:** SPC Shawn Kuller, SPC Lloyd Shanklin, SPC John Scallon; **Schweinfurt Mental Health:** CPL Tracy Edwards, SPC Karen Larsen; **Vilseck Mental Health:** SFC Mary Hogan, CPT Jeffrey Hill; and the **254<sup>th</sup> CSC Team:** SPC Sarah Hoffman.

## New Publications

- Stuart, J.A., Murray, K.M., Ursano, R.J., & Wright, K.M. (2002, Feb). The Department of Defense's Persian Gulf War Registry Year 2000: An examination of veterans' health status. *Military Medicine*, 167, 1-8.
- Wright, K.M., Huffman, A.H., Adler, A.B., & Castro, C.A. (2002). Psychological screening program overview. *Military Medicine*, 167 (10), 853-861.

## Studying Stress Markers at CMTC

USAMRU-E is leading a team of researchers in a new study that examines the relationship between multiple measures of stress and the effects of stress on critical outcomes to the military such as performance and health. As part of this study, Dr. Bob Sinclair and Jennifer Sommers, from Portland State University (PSU), and Dr. Bernd Johannes, from the German Center for Aviation and Space Psychology, met with CPT Thomas and the science staff in Heidelberg (15-18 DEC 02). The protocol, “Understanding Solider Resilience: A Multiple Method Study of the Relationship between Stress, Health, and Performance,” planned for FY04, will be conducted at a 7<sup>th</sup> Army Training Command site in Germany.

## WRAIR Commander Visits USAMRU-E

COL Jarboe, Commander, WRAIR, visited the unit (5-8 Nov 02). Following unit briefings, he presided over an award ceremony in which military personnel supporting the debriefing data collection this quarter were presented with the NATO and Kosovo Campaign medals and a unit plaque. Civilian and military personnel supporting the psychological screening data collection were presented with Certificates of Achievement and a unit plaque as well.

## State-of-the-Art on Performance

Initial chapter drafts for the SOAR “Metrics and methods in human performance modeling” were reviewed by MAJ Ness (USAMRU-E), LTC (P) Karl Friedl and MAJ Darren Ritzer (MRMC) and Drs. Tori Tepe and Barbara Palmer (IAC) in Heidelberg (7-11 Oct 02).

## Phoning it in

As part of an ongoing effort to improve data collection in the field, and at the request of the 30<sup>th</sup> MED BDE, a new process is being refined by USAMRU-E (MAJ James Ness and Mr. Joshua McDonald) to facilitate the way in which medical visits to Battalion Aid Stations are coded and transmitted for data management to higher headquarters. By capitalizing on available technology, iridium telephones are being adapted for use with personal digital assistants (PDAs). Since the project began in October 2002, the technology has been adapted, software programs developed, and the product enthusiastically received by medical staff during a site-visit to a training center in Hohenfels (27 Nov 02). Progress on the system was also briefed to LTC Sigmon, Deputy CDR 30<sup>th</sup> MED BDE and LTC Rice, 1AD Division Surgeon (12 Dec 02).



## Progress Continues for STO W

- COL Hoge, Chief, Behavioral Health and Epidemiology Department, WRAIR-NP, visited the unit (10-16 Nov 02) in support of coordinating the Science and Technology Objective “Interventions to enhance psychological resilience and prevent psychiatric casualties.”
- Additional records were reviewed in Landstuhl for the suicide data base project on 15 Nov 02 (Ms. Schroeder & CPL Haig).

## Conference Presentations

- McGurk, D.M., Thomas, J.L., & Bliese, P.D. (2-5 December 2002). *The effects of diversity on intragroup conflict in the US Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC)*. Poster presented at the 23rd Army Science Conference, Orlando, FL.
- Marcantonio, C., & Schroeder, E. D. (2002, November). *What works in therapy*. Paper presented at the European Branch of the American Counseling Association Annual Conference, Augsburg, Germany.

## Personnel Updates

- SPC Nicol Sinclair joined the unit on 6 SEP 02 from FT Hood, TX.
- Chris Collins, a PSS contractor, worked in the unit from 6 OCT 02 to 31 DEC 02.
- Brett Davis, a PSS contractor, began working in the unit on 14 OCT 02.
- Representatives from Anteon, Julie McGrath, Karen Dickman, and Jon Bolling, visited the unit to review issues related to the contract (18-22 Nov 02).
- Kathleen McConnell, a PSS contractor, began working in the unit on 9 DEC 02
- Angela Salvi, a PSS contractor, certified IA-level 1 at the Information Assurance Workshop, Heidelberg (4 Dec 02).
- SGT Deena Carr, NCOIC, joined the unit on 13 DEC 02 from FT Stewart, GA.
- Pamela Napolitano, administrative assistant, completed her contract with the unit on 31 DEC 02.

This is an unofficial Army publication, authorized under the provisions of AR 360-1, and published quarterly in the interest of the U.S. Army Medical Research Unit-Europe, CMR 442, APO AE 09042 (DSN: 371-2626). This issue was approved by HQ, WRAIR for release. Editorial views and opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army. Visit our homepage: <http://www.usamru-e.hq.usareur.army.mil/> to view our most recent briefs and reports. For information on our research initiatives, contact: [james.ness@hbg.amedd.army.mil](mailto:james.ness@hbg.amedd.army.mil).

Commander, USAMRU-E  
Editor

MAJ James W. Ness  
Amy B. Adler, Ph.D.