



“WRAIR Forward”

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COMMANDER’S CORNER

In the year-and-a-half that I have been at USAMRU-E, the unit has hosted two visits from MG Lester Martinez-Lopez, the outgoing Commanding General of the US Army Medical Research and Materiel Command (MRMC). In both of these visits, MG Martinez-Lopez spent several hours discussing specific research details and future plans with our small staff of researchers. These visits provided wonderful opportunities to discuss ideas, focus research plans, and integrate our efforts with those of our larger organization. In the first of these visits (July of 2004) MG Martinez-Lopez emphasized the need for a validated one-page psychological screen. His comments were instrumental in USAMRU-E's development of the 90-120 day post-deployment short screen. During this quarter (February of 2005) MG Martinez-Lopez visited again and provided guidance on future screening research. Much of this edition of the *WRAIR Forward* centers on screening and the impact research on screening has had within the Department of Defense. As a unit, we thank MG Martinez-Lopez for his direct contributions to our work and wish him the best in his retirement.

-LTC Paul D. Bliese

DoD-wide Impact of New Screen

Following the successful implementation of USAMRU-E’s post-deployment psychological short screen in November and December 2004, and the release of a USAMRU-E study documenting the rise in psychological symptoms from immediate reintegration to 120 day post-deployment, Dr. Winkenwerder, Director, OSD (HA), announced a new policy to screen military personnel three to six months following re-deployment from combat.

This announcement, featured in Stars and Stripes articles (26 and 31 JAN 05) and other news outlets, establishes a new screening requirement for military personnel several months after their return from combat.

Implementing the Short Screen: Results

Results of the implementation of the short screen with the 1st Armored Division (1AD) were prepared by USAMRU-E and provided to BG Hawley-Boland, Commander, ERMIC, for presentation at the Tricare Conference (JAN 05) and the USAREUR Board of Directors meeting (FEB 05) and provided to the 1AD. LTG Kiley, Surgeon General, US Army, was also briefed on screening implementation and results by BG Hawley-Bowland in a meeting on 10 MAR 05.

The 1AD experience with screening Soldiers demonstrated the feasibility of implementing a short screen division-wide and provided an estimate of the number of referrals expected after Soldiers complete the 90-120 day post-deployment short screen. The analyses provide planning figures that include 122 referrals for every 1,000 Soldiers screened. Of these 122 referrals, 28 will be for immediate care; 8 will be for the Alcohol Substance Abuse Program (ASAP); 17 referrals will be to Social Work Services; and 69 referrals will be to mental health.

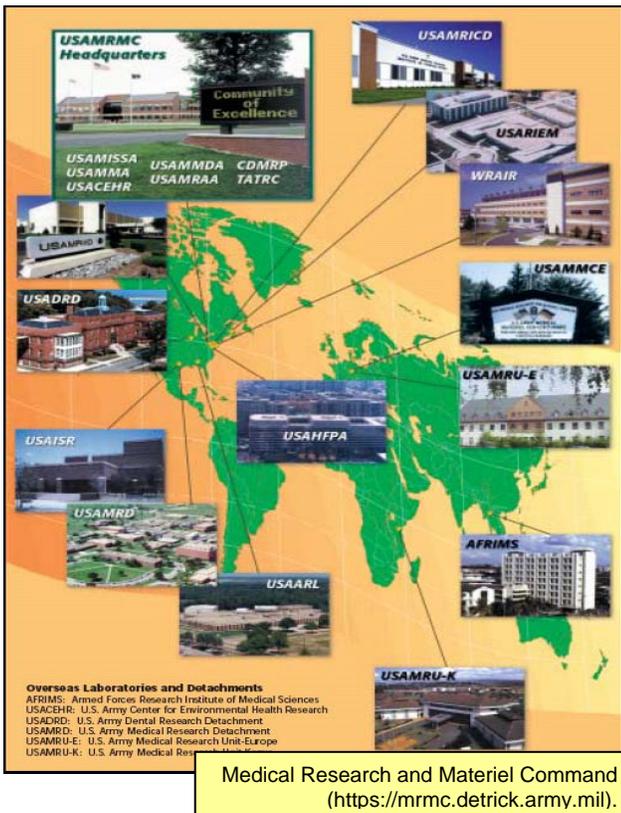
Meanwhile, requests to use the short screen continue. This quarter requests included the 1st Cavalry Division at Ft. Hood, TX; the 179th Ohio Air National Guard; 44th Medical Brigade at Ft. Bragg, NC; the 902nd MI Group at Ft. Meade, MD; the FIRST Naval Construction at Norfolk, VA; the Marine Corps Base and Hickam Air Force Base at Schofield Barracks, HI; the 883rd Combat Stress Company (USAR), Ft. Drum, NY; and the U.S. Marine Corps.

Interest in the USAMRU-E screen extends beyond the US military as evidenced by a commentary published in the 9 MAR 05 edition of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA). This commentary specifically discusses USAMRU-E screening efforts. (WRAIR Protocol #889).

Future Research Directions

USAMRU-E is working to refine the short screen items through a series of steps:

1. Re-validate the short screen with another sample of Soldiers at post-deployment.
2. Examine new items on the screen to assess sleep problems.
3. Improve items assessing marital and alcohol problems.



ATO

Heidelberg Meeting

COL Charles Hoge, Director, Division of Neuroscience and Neuropsychiatry, WRAIR, visited the unit 14-18 FEB 05

to discuss the unit's research program transition from the Science and Technology Objective “*Interventions to enhance soldier resilience and prevent psychiatric casualties*” to a new method of research planning, the Army Technology Objective (ATO). COL Hoge and the USAMRU-E science team developed detailed research plans for USAMRU-E and the Department of Military Psychiatry. These plans will now be forwarded to the Research Area Director III: Military Operational Medicine, ad MRMC, for further preparation in the approval process.

MRMC Commander and USAMRU-E

MG Lester Martinez-Lopez, Commanding General, MRMC met with research staff 15 FEB 05 to discuss research plans and progress. He signed off on an Executive Summary detailing the link between USAMRU-E's screening research and the new DoD policy, and recognized several unit members with Commander's coins.

MRMC Commander's Conference held in Tampa, Florida, was attended by unit commander LTC Bliese and unit NCOIC SGT Carr from 31 JAN – 3 FEB 05.



Aston University Talk

LTC Bliese gave an invited talk at Aston University in Birmingham, England (UK) as part of the leadership center at the university. (11-12 JAN 05).

Meetings on Science

- The USAMRU-E science team met with Ms. Karin Murray, Well-being Program Manager, HQ USAREUR, G-1 13 JAN 05 to discuss briefing and consultation plans.

A second meeting with Ms. Murray, and other USAREUR representatives was held 17 MAR 05 and attended by LTC Bliese, Dr. Wright, and CPT Cabrera. The goal of the meeting was to discuss recommendations for a team coming to USAREUR to assess family readiness issues.

- Dr. Gilad Chen, Assistant Professor of Management at Texas A&M, visited the unit to discuss analysis of the OPTEMPO data set (WRAIR Protocol #700) 22-23 FEB 05.
- Dr. Robert Ployhart, an expert in psychometrics, met with USAMRU-E staff to review his detailed analyses of existing screening scales, items, and cut-off scores 22-23 FEB 05.

Meeting on Stats Software

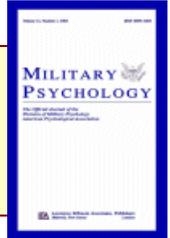
On 10-11 FEB 05 LTC Bliese met with Dr. Douglas Bates in Zurich, Switzerland. Dr. Bates is a professor in the statistics department of the University of Wisconsin and is working in conjunction with Toyon Corporation on a Department of Defense Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) contract designed to improve mathematical algorithms for estimating random coefficient models. Statistical models of this nature potentially have wide use within the military. LTC Bliese is the COR for the grant.

Site Visit to WRAIR and MRMC

LTC Bliese and Mr. Rahey met with WRAIR and MRMC administrative staff (3-7 JAN 05).

NEW PUBLICATION

Adler, A.B., Thomas, J.L., & Castro, C.A. (2005). Measuring up: Comparing self-reports with unit records for assessing soldier performance. *Military Psychology*, 17, 3-24.



Training the Professionals

SGT Carr, NCOIC, USAMRU-E, conducted an In-Service on psychological screening and case disposition for Social Work Services at Heidelberg Hospital on 17 Mar 05

Debriefing Team Recalled

Conducting the Debriefing Effectiveness study with combat veterans inched closer to implementation this quarter despite a last-minute cancellation of a WRAIR research team preparing to deploy to Kuwait. (protocol #862)



Prescription May Be Writing

Following the lead of numerous studies detailing the physical and psychological health benefits of emotional disclosure through writing, USAMRU-E researchers have taken steps to test out the writing procedure with troops returning from combat.

In response to a contract issued by USAMRU-E, Dr. Pennebaker, expert on the impact of emotional disclosure on health and professor of psychology at the University of Texas, Austin, found that benefits from writing could be obtained in a one-day writing session as opposed to the more typical three-day session.

The new USAMRU-E protocol, “*The effect of cognitive disclosure on Soldier behavioral health following combat deployment*,” received scientific approval through the Office of Research Management on 21 MAR 05. (#1171)

Book Series Prepped for Publication

Dr. Adler met with co-editors LTC Castro and Dr. Britt, associate professor of psychology, Clemson University, to review final changes to a military psychology book series to be published by Praeger this year (22-24 MAR 05).

Personnel Updates

- CACI contractor Ms. Rice departed from USAMRU-E after 1 year as a research associate (18 FEB 05).
- Ms. Ippolito was awarded a contract to review justice and health outcomes (31 JAN 05).
- Ms. Evans and Ms. Boone-Ealey were awarded contracts to perform archiving work (26 JAN 05 and 31 JAN 05, respectively).
- SPC Sinclair completed the USADART Group Counseling Course in San Antonio, Texas from 3-14 Jan 05.

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