BraveHeart: Welcome Back Veterans Southeastern Initiative

FAQS

What is Brave Heart: Welcome Back Veterans Southeastern Initiative?
BraveHeart: Welcome Back Veterans Southeastern Initiative is a new program that is driven by Emory University Trauma and Anxiety Program and Major League Baseball, with the funding from Major League Baseball Charities and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation. The program was developed to help veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan and their families in the Southeastern United States (AL, GA, SC) access help for PTSD and other mental health issues. This effort is led by Barbara Rothbaum, PhD, director of Emory University School of Medicine’s Trauma and Anxiety Recovery Program and leading posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) researcher.

What is PTSD?
Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is an anxiety disorder that can develop after someone has experienced a traumatic event in which either that individual or someone else’s life was in serious danger. Its symptoms can cause significant problems in people’s lives, with relationships/family, work/school, etc. If symptoms go untreated there is a greater risk for developing other issues, such as drug or alcohol abuse.

What is the prevalence of PTSD?
The greatest single debilitating injury of soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan is PTSD. (Gen. Peter Chiarelli statement to the House Armed Services Committee 12/10/09) 40% of those who've fought in Afghanistan or Iraq have or will acquire PTSD. These rates have already eclipsed the 30% lifetime rate of Vietnam vets. The rise is attributed to longer, more frequent combat tours and to the nearly 96% survival rate of seriously injured combatants due to advances in battlefield medicine. (NCPTSD reported)

Why the need for this program?
Veterans are reluctant to get help, and soldiers who are suffering PTSD are six times more likely to commit suicide than those who are not. Cognitive behavioral therapy has been shown to be effective for treating PTSD, so linkage to appropriate Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and community mental health resources is crucial.

Why the need for this program in the Southeast region?
In VISN-7 (AL, GA and SC) alone it is estimated that there are between 1,350,000 and 2,250,000 veterans residing in these states, as of 2010. 15,003-36,000 of which are under the age of 25. When we add family members, it’s likely there are 11 million people in these three states alone who are interested in this message.
**How does it work?**
This program utilizes cutting-edge technology to allow veterans and their family members to access user friendly online, anonymous PTSD self assessment tools in the privacy of their own homes, in addition to connecting them to treatment resources in their area. Continuing education and outreach will be provided to primary care physicians throughout the Southeast, including rural areas. Information will be available to patients regarding PTSD assessment and literature with contact information for the program.

Additional resources will be added to the BraveHeart website in the second year of the grant to address resources specifically for children whose families are dealing with PTSD. This includes an interactive program, Calmcraft, which helps children learn to regulate their breathing in stressful situations.

**How do you access the program?**
The website is at [www.BraveHeartVeterans.org](http://www.BraveHeartVeterans.org). For those veterans and family members who would like additional live assistance, they can contact the Brave Heart Clinical Care Coordinator (404.727.8964 or care@braveheartveterans.org), who will act as a liaison with the VA and community resources, assisting them with the process for getting connected with the OIF/OEF team at their nearest VA medical facility or community provider.

**Why is Major League Baseball involved?**
Baseball players are utilized to increase outreach efforts and decrease the stigma associated with PTSD and treatment. Atlanta Braves will launch BraveHeart at Turner Field on Memorial Day, 2011.

**Are other baseball organizations participating?**
In addition to the $1 million grant to Emory University with the support of the Atlanta Braves, the organizations that will receive funding are the Regents of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, supported by the Detroit Tigers; the Red Sox Foundation in Boston, supported by the Boston Red Sox and the University of California at Los Angeles, supported by the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim.