
NASEM Committee on Evaluating the Effects of Opioids and Benzodiazepines on All-Cause Mortality in Veterans

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Wounded Warrior Project MISSION

To honor and empower wounded warriors.

VISION

To foster the most successful, well-adjusted generation of wounded service members in our nation's history.



» What does Wounded Warrior Project Do for Post-9/11 Veterans?

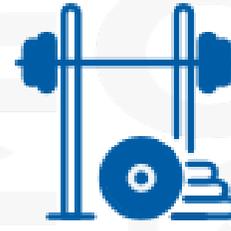
- Founded in 2003 as a small, grassroots effort providing simple care and comfort items to the hospital bedsides of the first wounded service members returning home from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.



Connection



Mental and Brain Health



Physical Wellness



Career and Benefits Counseling



Independence Program

» Pain in the Post-9/11 Population- Polytrauma Clinical Triad

- Objectives for the panel:

- Pain in the Post-9/11 population from Wounded Warrior Project perspective
- Brain health support and Suicide
- Access to care, and coordination of care

Sleep disturbances?
Suicide risk?

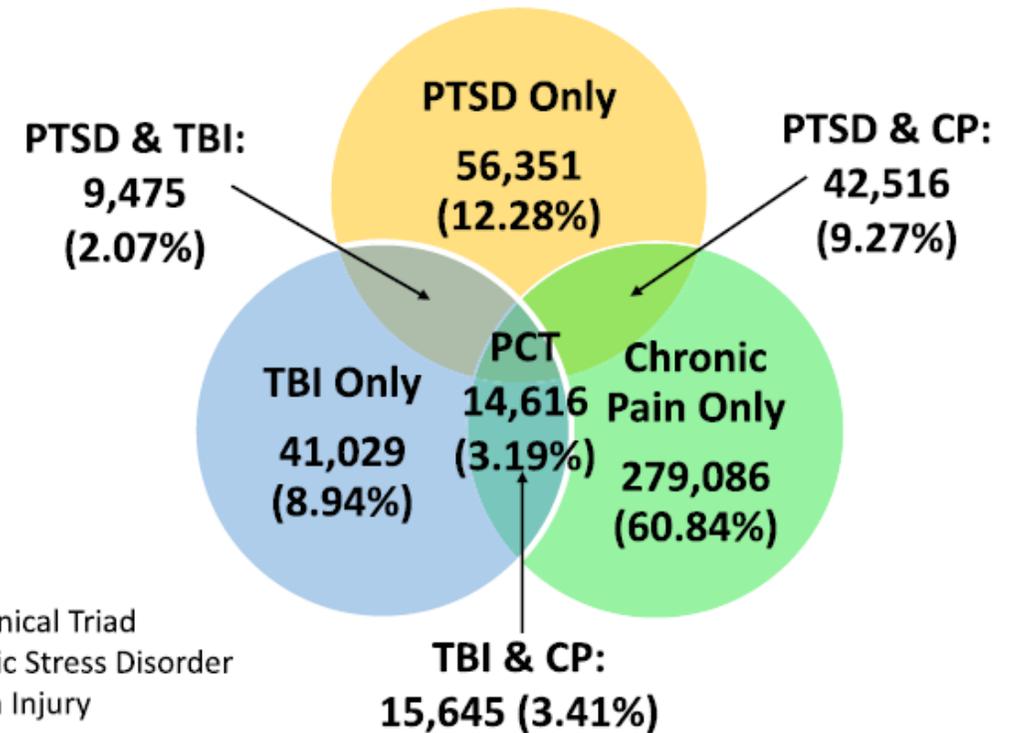
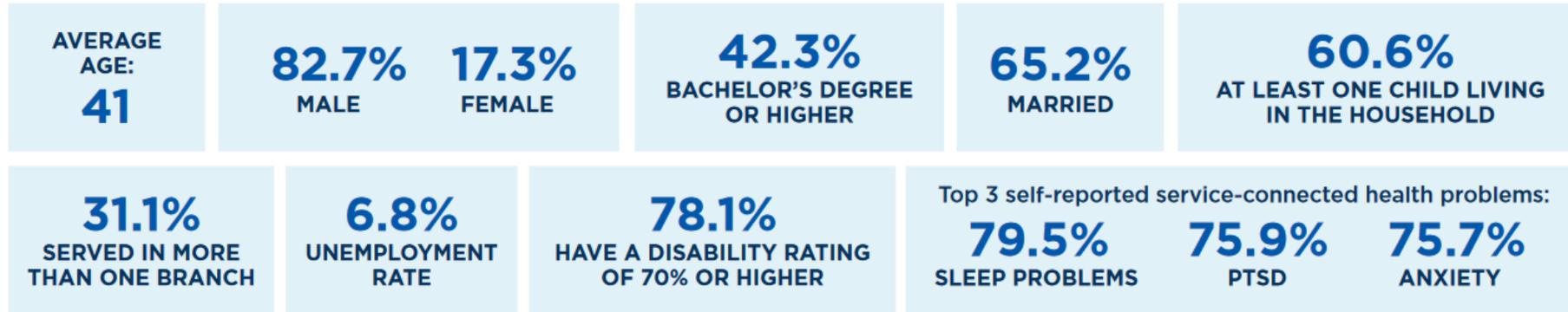
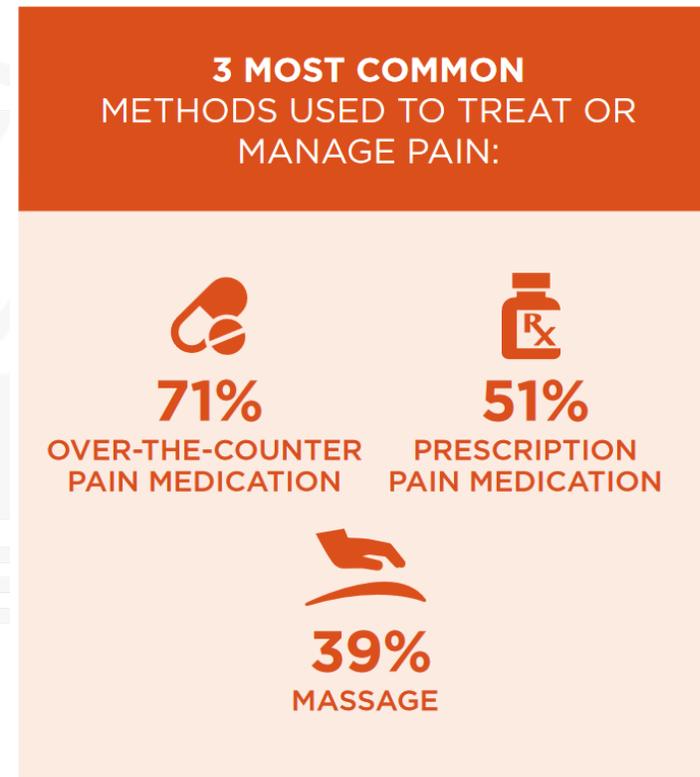


FIGURE 1. Polytrauma clinical triad among active duty service members (2010–2015) diagnosis and cases (n = 458,718).

» Pain in the Post-9/11 Population- Annual Warrior Survey



- About **three in four** (76%) Wounded Warrior Project warriors scored in a range indicating moderate or severe pain
- High pain scores correlated to lower QoL
- Half of warriors who reported pain in the previous three months reported they were “only a little effective” or “not at all effective” in managing their pain



» TBI + Pain...



Association of Traumatic Brain Injury With Chronic Pain in Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans: Effect of Comorbid Mental Health Conditions

Seal et al. Arch Phys Med Rehabil. 2017 Aug;98(8):1636-1645.

- Compared to those with no TBI, PTSD, or depression, there was an independent risk for chronic pain in veterans with mild TBI, which was higher in veterans with moderate to severe TBI.
- Combat veterans with pain and pain related disability is commonly associated with TBI (PTSD and Depression or both)

Do postconcussive symptoms from traumatic brain injury in combat Veterans predict risk for receiving opioid therapy for chronic pain?

Bertenthal et al Brain Inj. 2018;32(10):1188-1196.

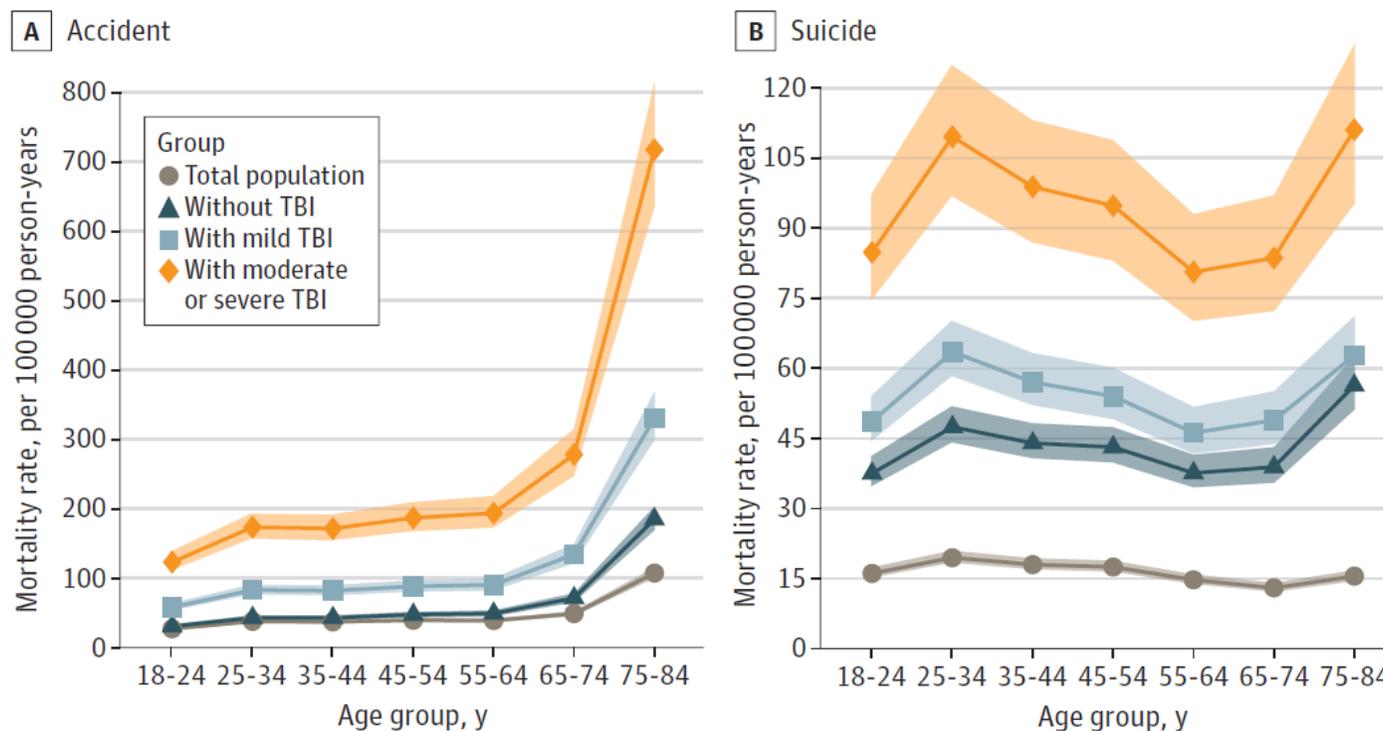
- Self-reported severe and very severe postconcussive symptoms predicted initiation of long-term and short-term opioid use for chronic pain

» TBI + Pain...Suicide and Mortality

Association of Traumatic Brain Injury With Mortality Among Military Veterans Serving After September 11, 2001

Howard et al. JAMA Network Open. 2022;5(2):e2148150.

- Veterans with moderate to severe TBI accounted for 33.6% of total excess deaths, 11-fold higher than would otherwise be expected



These studies, together, suggest that TBI should be viewed as a singular, independent factor that contributes to an overall decline in quality of life, presents as an elevated risk factor for suicide, and drives mental health symptom reporting and substance use dependence.

» Wounded Warrior Project Programs

WWP's Physical Health and Wellness Program

- Empowers warriors and family members to make long-term changes toward a **healthier life through movement, nutritional education, coaching, goal-setting, and skill-building.**
- Sports tailored for all abilities: **Adaptive Sports** empowers warriors to unleash their highest potential by participating in modified athletic opportunities designed for their individual abilities.
- Cycling: **Soldier Ride**® is a multiday adaptive cycling event that lets warriors get active and build camaraderie while riding alongside fellow warriors

Clinical Care



- Comprehensive Brain Health and Trauma Program- Special Operations
 - Comprehensive 2-day evaluation to identify target issues and 2-week TBI IOP which uses an **evidence-based multimodal approach** to target and treat symptoms.

» Summary of Interventions: Three Ps Rule

- People
- Place
- Purpose

» Questions?

