

BOOK REVIEWS

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Invisible Wounds of War: Psychological and Cognitive Injuries, Their Consequences and Services to Assist Recovery

Edited by Terri Tanielian and Lisa H. Jaycox. Published by The RAND Centre for Military Health Policy Research, Washington, DC, 2008. ISBN 978-0-8330-4454-9. Price: \$55.

This book aims to appeal to anyone who might provide services for, have responsibility for or develop policy for service personnel and military veterans or their families. The book has seven sections which provide a historical account of military health policy and the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts, detail about the prevalence of a variety of mental health disorders (including post traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury) in military veterans and also detail the economic and health care challenges associated with the conflicts.

The book is heavily focused on the US military and, understandably, discusses the important issues from a US viewpoint. For US readers, it provides a good overview of the subject matter. However, since the US forces appear to have much higher rates of psychological ill-health than do other nations, including the UK, and because of the peculiarities of the US military and civilian health care systems, non-US readers may find much of the book's information of little interest.

Another important factor for readers to consider is that the presented research does not appear to be wholly balanced, at least from a non-US perspective. While the RAND is a highly thought of organization, with very respectable mission aims, the book's 453 pages tend to discuss how bad things are for US service-personnel without paying perhaps sufficient attention to the lessons that the wider research community has to offer. The book does lay out well the economic arguments for the US government to 'do something' about the psychological health of their personnel; however, given the current harsh financial climate in the UK, occupational physicians may prefer to download it free from the RAND's own website (<http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG720/>) instead of purchasing it themselves.

Rating

★★ (Reference only)

Neil Greenberg