



US DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

BLAST INJURY RESEARCH PROGRAM COORDINATING OFFICE

Threat Analysis

Characterization and Comparison of Combat-Related Injuries in Women during OIF and OEF

To support gender-based research efforts in the military, researchers at NHRC critically examined what types of combat-related injuries military women sustained in recent conflicts. The researchers also investigated the likelihood of leaving active military duty after a deployment-related injury, as well as an examination of acute care medical resource usage in the severely injured female population. US Servicewomen who sustained combat-related injury in OIF or OEF between January 2003 and May 2014 were identified from NHRC's EMED. Injuries were then characterized using Abbreviated Injury Scale and International Classification of Diseases, 9th Revision codes. For study purposes, 844 combat-related injury episodes in women were utilized from EMED. Fifty-one percent ($n = 433$) were OIF injuries and 49 percent ($n = 411$) were OEF injuries. Blast events were responsible for 90 percent of injuries. The average ISS was 3, with no statistical difference in means between OIF and OEF. Of significance were increased head injuries in OEF compared with OIF (80 percent versus 48 percent; $p < 0.001$). Although the majority of combat-related injuries suffered by women were mild, some women suffered life-threatening injuries, and nearly 65 percent of the injury episodes resulted in more than one injury. In-patient hospital days averaged 31.6 days post-injury in women with severe injuries ($ISS > 9$). At the time of this study, more than 65 percent of the injured women remained on active military status, either active duty, reserve, or National Guard. Future studies will investigate quality of life outcomes and gender differences in combat-related injuries.