

TREAT THE TROOPS: MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

It is not my intent to criticize, but rather to reply to Judith Lauer's recent editorial.

I certainly do agree that Konrad Marshall's series "A war within" was a riveting account of the tragedy of war. His journalism is exceptional and quite worthy of recognition. He has captured the very essence of what needs to be done for our returning military and their families.

May I first state that I am a proud military wife. My husband has served several tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, and I know, first hand, what military families face. I have sat for months at a time knowing that our troops need good doctors and deserve our finest care and compassion, yet all the while frozen in fear for his safety.

We were the lucky ones. Our children were grown and we had no financial burdens, yet the stresses military families face are unique and the multiple deployments disruptive to all. Although we personally we not affected by PTSD, we have witnessed it crush families.

Judith stated "Let's hope the military and the Veterans Administration do a better job of treating post traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury and preventing suicides."

This Sunday, September 27, we are doing just that.

The Indiana State Medical Association Alliance (ISMA-A) is hosting a *PTSD Walk for Awareness* in Indianapolis at the American Legion Mall at 1pm. There will be a Ceremony aligning the efforts of the Indiana State Medical Association, our Alliance, the Indiana government, and the Indiana National Guard. Dignitaries include the Lt. Governor, Becky Skillman; the National President of the American Medical Association, Dr. J. James Rohack; The Adjutant General of Indiana, Major General R. Martin Umbarger; Senator Tom Wyss and Representative Phyllis Pond. Let it be known that MGen Umbarger lends his full support to our PTSD Awareness Campaign.

This is a symbolic one mile walk to raise awareness of PTSD with our returning deployed military members and their families. The event is free and family friendly with treats and fun for kids. In addition, there will be carefully selected PTSD educational materials and resources available on site to help.

In addition, the Alliance will be moving into the next tier of our PTSD Awareness Campaign with the education of our young medical students and resident physicians.

The educational component of our campaign is well underway. I am very proud to report that the Alliance has successfully joined the hands of the military, the ISMA physicians, the Roudebush VA Hospital and our state government to collectively address this issue. The Indiana General Assembly, having adopted House Resolution No. 69 in support of PTSD Awareness, has endorsed this initiative. We are not aware of any other state that has aligned these forces.

Sunday morning, an intensive educational push will occur at the Roudebush VA Hospital. Military physicians, medics and chaplains from all over Indiana will gather to tour their TBI/PTSD Clinic, attend special lectures, and receive in depth training, learning the latest techniques regarding PTSD and TBI treatment.

At the same time, ISMA physician leaders from across Indiana will be voting to support a new version of their adopted Resolution to query patients and screen for PTSD. Physicians who care.

It is the goal of the ISMA-A that through early screening, diagnosis and compassionate treatment, long term disability may be avoided. Our motto is **“Treat the Troops: Mental Health Matters”**.

We are serious about PTSD and its related violence and suicide. Come walk a mile for the troops; show them your support. Collectively, we can make a difference.

Cami Pond

President, Indiana State Medical Association Alliance, 2009-2010

PTSD Awareness Campaign Chair