



PTSD Initiative

Research to restore lives

**An Initiative of
the Gallipoli
Medical Research
Foundation and RSL
(Queensland Branch)**

*Working together to
enhance veteran health*



GALLIPOLI
MEDICAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Remembrance through research



**RETURNED & SERVICES
LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA**

QUEENSLAND BRANCH

PTSD

the signs

Re-experiencing symptoms

including intrusive memories, nightmares & flashbacks

Persistent avoidance

Of either internal (memories, thoughts, feelings) or external reminders of the event

Negative alterations in mood & cognitions

Feelings of detachment and inability to feel positive emotions

Alterations in arousal and reactivity

Including hypervigilance and sleep disturbance

Physical comorbidities

Including gastro-intestinal symptoms

It is estimated that approximately **8.3% of currently serving ADF members** will have experienced **PTSD** in the last 12 months, which is significantly higher than in the Australian community (5.2%) www.defence.gov.au

It is estimated that over 1 million Australians suffer from PTSD at some point in their lives.



Three out of every four Australians will experience a traumatic event in their lives.



1 in 4 Vietnam veterans develop posttraumatic stress across their lifetime www.va.gov

Veterans and military personnel are not the only people who suffer from PTSD. First responders, emergency service personnel, and anyone who has witnessed or experienced a traumatic event is at risk of developing PTSD.

A gap in worldwide knowledge



Long considered a solely psychological condition, there was very little understanding of the physical toll of posttraumatic stress disorder. For the sake of our veterans, and all sufferers of PTSD, this needed to change...

PTSD Initiative: Vietnam Veteran Study

In 2013, Gallipoli Medical Research Foundation and RSL (Queensland Branch) commenced an ambitious undertaking for the good of our veterans. The Vietnam Veteran Study was a world-first research project investigating both the long term physical and psychological toll of PTSD in Vietnam veterans. Nearly 300 Vietnam veterans participated in the study which included 25 medical and psychological assessments.

Key Findings

The study identified the following conditions associated with PTSD **independent** of the typical disease risk factors such as age, obesity, smoking, and alcohol intake.

Participants with PTSD...

Were **two times** more likely to have abnormal liver texture, suggestive of **liver disease**.

Had a **two to three times** increased risk of suffering from **gastrointestinal problems** including irritable bowel syndrome and its associated symptoms, in addition to reflux and stomach ulcers.



Were **three times** more likely to suffer from **obstructive sleep apnoea**.

Were almost **four times** more likely to have suffered a **heart attack** in the past.

Had **decreased lung function**.

Had a **four times** higher risk of **fatty liver**.

Changing lives through research

Clinicians involved in the care of those with PTSD should treat both the psychological and physical symptoms to reduce the severity of other risk factors and improve quality of life and survival.

Based on the research findings, GMRF and RSL (Queensland Branch) have launched a national GP education program. The program includes three components; an online education module, expert videos, and a national GP conference program.

To find out more, visit www.thinkgp.com.au/gmrf

The Vietnam Veteran Study research findings have been published in the Medical Journal of Australia; a high impact, peer review journal that is read by the Australian medical community.

McLeay, Sarah C., et al.
"Physical comorbidities of post-traumatic stress disorder in Australian Vietnam War veterans." *Med J Aust* 206.6 (2017): 251-257.

The PTSD Initiative is proudly supported by -



Gallipoli Medical Research Foundation

Find out more about how we are working to enhance the health of our veterans at www.gallipoliresearch.com.au, or contact us
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