

Some Veterans Face Waiting Lists For Mental Health Treatment, Report Finds

Medical News Today, October 26, 2006

Nearly half of 60 veteran health centers surveyed have limited mental health services available to veterans because of an influx of new patients who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, according to a report released Thursday by the Democratic staff of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, CQ Today reports.

The centers provide individual and group counseling, mainly for treating post-traumatic stress disorder. According to the report -- which was commissioned by Rep. Michael Michaud (D-Maine), ranking member of the Veterans Affairs Health Subcommittee -- 40% of centers surveyed said an increased workload has negatively affected their patient treatment.

In addition, 17% said they had to begin waiting lists for veterans to receive treatment. According to an August VA report, more than one in three veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan have reported mental health concerns. VA officials challenged the survey, calling it "unscientific" (Yoest, CQ Today, 10/20).

According to the San Diego Union-Tribune, testimony given to the Pentagon's Task Force on Mental Health last week concluded that limited resources, "poor training and staff burnout are frustrating the military's efforts to treat mental illnesses." Mark Russell, a Navy psychologist who testified at the hearing, said, "We are in a crisis situation, and it's going to get worse" (Rogers, San Diego Union-Tribune, 10/20).