



Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation Awards Mental Health Grants of Nearly \$3 Million to Support Returning Veterans

Mental Health & Well-Being initiative funds six additional community-based programs designed to provide essential support for military service personnel and veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan

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NEW YORK--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Soldiers returning home after serving in Iraq or Afghanistan sometimes find that their greatest battle still lies ahead. Military deployments can trigger mental health problems such as depression, post-traumatic stress and substance abuse. Of nearly 2 million service personnel deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, as many as 300,000 may be in need of mental health services.

The Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation – through its *Mental Health & Well-Being* initiative – has supported innovative initiatives to address the mental health needs of our returning veterans since the program was launched in 2011. Today, the Foundation announced six additional grants totaling nearly \$3 million.

“Returning veterans are eager to get on with their lives and build a better future for themselves and their families,” says John Damonti, president, Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation. “But many face emotional and physical health challenges that can have serious consequences if they are not addressed. Through the Foundation’s *Mental Health & Well-Being* initiative, we are creating sustainable community-based support systems and helping to improve the quality of care for our veterans.”

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Like its other global initiatives to reduce health disparities and improve health outcomes, the Foundation’s *Mental Health & Well-Being* initiative leverages public and private sector partners in the community and outside the clinic to increase disease awareness, educate patients about effective self-management of their disease, reduce stigma and provide emotional support.

New partners receiving Foundation grants include:

- **Bedford VA Research Corporation, Inc. (BRCI)**, which will receive \$334,224 over two years for community-level prevention of intimate partner violence (IPV) – actual or threatened physical, sexual or psychological harm – among veterans. The incidence of IPV is significantly higher among veterans than the civilian population. The Intimate Partner Violence Prevention Program, administered by the BRCI of Bedford, Massachusetts, will raise awareness about IPV

within the VA community and provide screening and referral for those at highest risk for IPV. This pilot program targets veterans who are receiving mental health care at the Bedford VA Medical Center, with emphasis on those who have served in Afghanistan and Iraq.

- **Regents of the University of Michigan**, which will receive \$916,000 over three years to pilot the Peer Advisors for Veteran Education (PAVE) to serve student veterans on 10 college campuses throughout the Midwest. PAVE will connect veterans attending college with peer advisors who can assist and advise them in navigating college life. Thanks to the implementation of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, veterans have increased opportunities to enroll in universities and community colleges. However, about 50 percent of veteran students drop out during their first year of college. Among PAVE's goals will be to identify mental health issues, create a sense of community and support among student veterans, ease the transition from the military to the university, increase student veteran retention rates and improve student veteran academic performance.
- **University of California, San Francisco**, which will receive \$550,000 over two years to design and implement online courses for veterans, and to create an online veteran mental health support system. The program will build online communities around college-level courses, provide mental health and general health support, and train peer advisors through the Next Mission Project. The project contains three main components: 1) deployment of an online version of the initial *Next Mission* course; 2) design and implementation of a new course tailored to the specific challenges women face in the military; and 3) creation of a collaborative health network that leverages the power and support of groups to enable participants to attain common health goals using secure, private, modern social media technology.
- **The National Center on Family Homelessness**, which will receive \$300,000 over two years to build community support services and health care worker capacity for homeless female veterans. As the number of female veterans continues to rise, so does the percentage of female veterans among the nation's homeless population, which is expected to rise from 5 percent to 15 percent. The higher rates of traumatic life events, PTSD and serious mental illness significantly impact female veterans' ability to access support, maintain health and obtain and maintain housing and employment. The project will integrate trauma-informed practices – that is, those based on an understanding of vulnerabilities specific to trauma survivors – to organizations serving homeless female veterans.

In addition to the four partners announced above, the Foundation announced two additional grants related to Vets Prevail, an innovative new online resource for veterans to help ease post-deployment readjustment to civilian life. Vets Prevail was developed through a collaboration of mental health researchers and clinicians at top universities and hospitals with the backing of the National Science Foundation and the McCormick Foundation. The new partners and programs include:

- **Rush University Medical Center Department of Behavioral Sciences**, which will receive \$587,578 over two years to create and conduct a formal, randomized, controlled trial to evaluate the efficacy of the Vets Prevail model of systematic online behavioral health interventions and solutions in comparison with standard prevention programs already in place. This evaluation would provide the VHA with rigorous efficacy data.
- **Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America**, which will receive \$181,765 over one year to assist in the recruitment of patients into the controlled research trial and to produce a paper to

be published in the VA's Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Development highlighting the results from the Vets Prevail research study. Such a study, if positive, would allow the VHA to move forward and integrate Vets Prevail broadly across its ongoing efforts in support of returning vets.

The Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation is working with a number of other public and private partners, including Suicide Prevention International, Mental Health Association in New York State, MDRC, Massachusetts General Hospital and the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill as part the Mental Health & Well-Being initiative.

"We are proud to help support our vets, who have sacrificed so much for our nation," says Catharine Grimes, director, Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation. "Through the *Mental Health & Well-Being* grant program, we provide funding for a wide range of initiatives in support of veterans and their families, including members of the National Guard and Reservists. While the funding for each initiative is limited to one, two or three years, each is structured to provide sustainable and ongoing support for our veterans. In addition, project findings and experiences will be widely shared with other public and private institutions and community-based organizations through published results, conferences, symposia, white papers and online presentations."

About the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation

The Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation is an independent 501(c)(3) charitable organization whose mission is to reduce health disparities and improve health outcomes around the world for patients disproportionately affected by serious diseases. For more information about the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation, please visit www.bms.com/foundation or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/bmsnews.

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