

HOW YOU ARE HELPING OUR HEROES, NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

Thanks to your support, we're able to fund a ground-breaking study that's uncovering the long-term needs of those wounded in action.

Battlefield wounds sustained in a split-second can take years to heal. Thanks to your support, we are funding a world-leading study which follows-up on the health needs of Veterans and Servicemen years after they were injured in places like Afghanistan or Iraq.

Lance Corporal John Herbert's life was changed forever in 2008, when an Army Land Rover he was patrolling behind in Afghanistan's Helmand Province was blown up by an Improvised Explosive Device (IED). John suffered a brain haemorrhage, multiple lacerations and was blinded for three weeks.

Blast damage

Eleven years on, John still finds splinters of glass, plastic and metal appearing under his skin. Some of them he is able to prise out, others cause him to cut himself when he shaves. Almost daily, he is reminded of the damage the blast did



and he is worried about the long-term effect on his body. Will the shrapnel under his skin poison his blood or tissue, and how will his brain injury affect him in the years to come?

John's story is sadly not uncommon. During the conflict in Afghanistan alone, 2,188 military

personnel were admitted to field hospitals, many with life-changing injuries.

While many of those injured have since undergone extensive rehabilitation, their stories do not end there.

The ADVANCE Study, funded by Help for Heroes



and the Ministry of Defence (MOD), is studying the long-term health and welfare of people who were wounded like John. Expert clinicians are comparing everything from bone density to cholesterol levels and lung capacity to work out what wider impact being wounded might have on a Veteran's overall health.

Not only will this help us to best support them as they are discharged from the Armed Services, it might help prevent further long-term damage amongst future generations.

Lots to learn

John is one of over 1,000 taking part in the study. He believes that doing so will address some of the uncertainty that he and his family feel they currently face in the years ahead.

"Taking part in the ADVANCE Study means a lot to me, it feels like people actually care. I think people do understand (some of the needs of injured Veterans)

Taking part in the ADVANCE Study

ADVANCE is studying a group of combat casualties and combat veterans selected by Defence Statistics as fitting the following essential criteria:

- UK Armed Forces personnel
- Male
- Aged under 50 when deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan
- Aeromedically evacuated from theatre directly to a UK hospital OR matched for age, rank and role in theatre with somebody who was aeromedically evacuated

Anyone interested in taking part or wondering about eligibility, please email dmrc-advancestudyteam@mod.gov.uk or telephone 01509 251500, ext 3408

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but that there's a lot still to learn," says John.

Staff Sergeant Craig Davis is also taking part. Craig has never been wounded but is part of a control group which is also crucial to the study; by comparing personnel of the same age, some wounded and some not, the experts can work out what hidden, long-term damage the wounded body might have sustained. Keen to do something to help those less fortunate than him, Craig gave up some of his leave and flew from his unit in Germany to the UK to help with the study.

"I'm taking part not only to understand what my own body has been through

during 17 years of army service, but also to help the team gather knowledge that will hopefully improve (the lives of those injured). I feel privileged to be taking part," he says.

The ADVANCE study's initial findings are due later this year.

It's thanks to your support that we are able to help pay for work like this, and to make a promise to people like John that we are doing all we can to support their needs, now and in the future.