

The ADVANCE baseline mental health findings are now out!



Mental health outcomes of male UK military personnel deployed to Afghanistan and the role of combat injury

We are pleased to inform you that the baseline mental health findings from the ADVANCE Study have just been published in the scientific journal *Lancet Psychiatry*. This is the second ADVANCE scientific publication - and we look forward to sharing many more with you! As always, a huge thankyou to all of you for making the Study possible – without the participants there would be no ADVANCE.

Below, we provide a summary of the baseline mental health findings and explain what the findings mean. We have also recorded a [short video](#) on the results.



The long-term mental health outcomes of UK Armed Forces personnel who sustained serious combat injuries during deployment to Afghanistan are largely unknown. ADVANCE is the first study to look at these outcomes on a relatively large scale and over a long period of time. The main findings from the ADVANCE baseline data analysis are shown in the box below, but let's look at some background information first.

Background

You may remember the mental health questionnaire you were asked to fill in when you came to Headley Court or Stanford Hall for your ADVANCE visit. Among other things, you were asked to answer questions related to depression, anxiety and PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). We have now analysed all the data from these questionnaires from your baseline visits.

The aim of this piece of ADVANCE research was to find out whether the injured group (who have suffered combat-related traumatic injury) and the uninjured comparison group have differences in terms of their mental health outcomes. We looked at depression, anxiety, PTSD and mental health multimorbidity (PTSD with depression and/or anxiety).

What is depression?

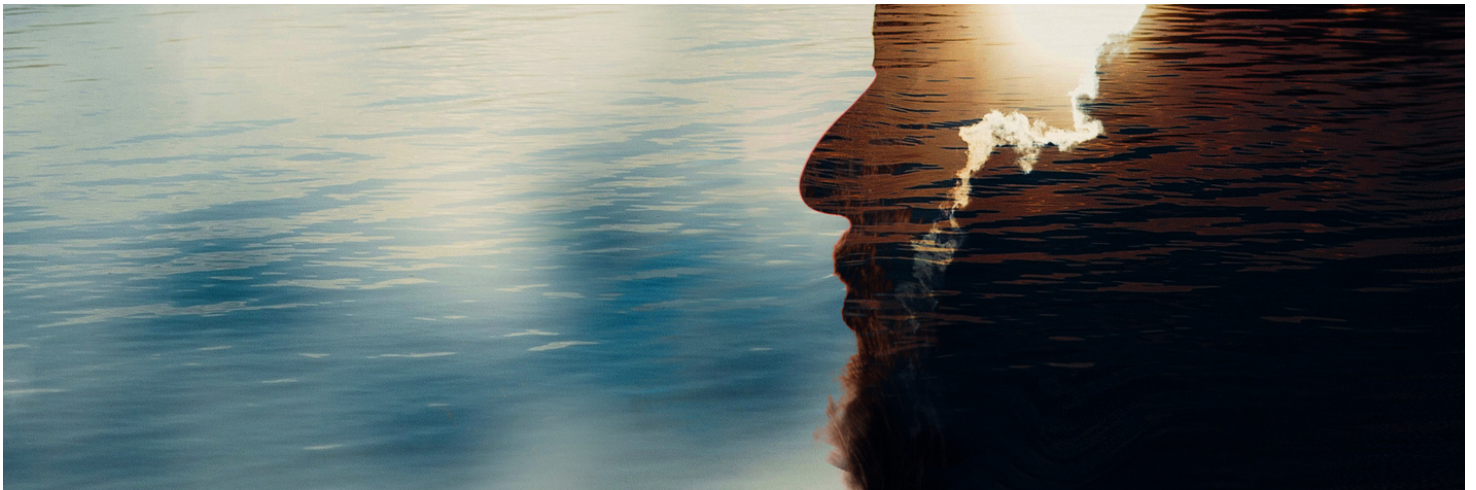
Depression can include symptoms of low mood, tiredness, feeling apathetic and not enjoying the things or activities you usually enjoy. Many people experiencing depression also have symptoms of anxiety.

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a feeling of worry or fear. Feeling a little anxious is normal. However, some people have a hard time controlling their anxiety and it affects their daily life, for example, in forming and maintaining relationships, enjoying their leisure time or achieving their goals and in holding down a job. Anxiety is the main symptom of several other mental health difficulties, including PTSD.

What is PTSD?

PTSD is a mental health condition which can develop after a stressful, frightening or distressing event or a prolonged traumatic experience. Individuals with PTSD may experience vivid flashbacks, intrusive thoughts and nightmares or disturbed sleep. In addition, some people with PTSD feel alert and on edge, irritable, aggressive, or cannot feel their feelings at all. People experiencing PTSD may also experience physical symptoms such as chest pains, headaches, dizziness or stomach aches.



The results

Our findings showed that the injured group had greater rates of depression, anxiety and PTSD compared to the uninjured group. However, the type of injury seemed to have a significant impact. Participants with amputation-related injuries had very similar rates of mental health problems compared to the uninjured group, whereas those with non-amputation injuries had significantly higher rates of mental health problems.

Here are the findings in more detail:

- Rates of PTSD, anxiety and depression were higher in the injured vs. uninjured group:
 - Depression: 23.6% in injured vs. 16.8% in uninjured.
 - Anxiety: 20.8% in injured vs. 13.5% in uninjured.
 - PTSD: 16.9% in injured vs. 10.5% uninjured.
- Rate of mental health multimorbidity was also higher in the injured vs. uninjured group (15.3% vs. 9.8%).
- Participants with amputations reported very similar rates of mental health issues compared to the uninjured group. However, participants with non-amputation injuries were up to twice as likely to suffer from mental health issues.

What do these findings mean and what happens next?

The ADVANCE Study has shown that serious physical combat injuries are associated with poorer mental health outcomes, though the type of injury has a significant impact on these outcomes. It is important to note that in both the injured and uninjured groups, the rates of PTSD were greater compared to the UK general population and both represented groups with increased psychological burden from multimorbidity.

One of the main questions that arises from the early mental health findings is around the differences in outcomes between the amputees and the injured non-amputees. We are working on finding out the reasons for these differences, and we might ask you some additional questions related to this at your next ADVANCE visit.

It is important to stress that these initial findings are from the baseline data only. As ADVANCE progresses, and as you attend your follow-up appointments, we will collect and analyse further data from you on your mental health as well as physical health. Your continued participation in ADVANCE will ensure greater understanding within the scientific community and increase awareness amongst policy makers surrounding the risks of poor mental health outcomes in UK military personnel.



Resources for mental health support

If you feel that you are having problems that affect your daily mental health and wellbeing, please see our [signposting booklet](#). In the booklet you will find details of services supporting people with mental and physical health conditions.

Get in touch

If you have any questions or would like to talk to the ADVANCE team, you can get in touch with us via e-mail at dmrc-advancestudyteam@mod.gov.uk or call us on +44 (0)1509 251 500, extension 3408.



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