

Clinical, Virtual Pathways Likely the New Future of TBI Care

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Following a lengthy session on TBI at the 2016 Military Health System Research Symposium, SSG Forest Whiting laid bare the Army's funding approach in clear, plain language.

"We're looking for potential," said Whiting, currently aligned with the U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command's Combat Casualty Care Research Program, "but we also need to see a good amount of technological progression as well."

That difficult balancing act –the need to see both promise and results– was on full display during a session dedicated specifically to prehospital TBI care; one which featured potential emerging care options ranging from virtual reality devices to more aggressive observational techniques to the expanded use of ultrasound technology to spot pockets of cranial pressure in suspected TBI patients.

"We need to stay ahead of the curve when it comes to TBI care," said Alicia Crowder, PhD, Director of the CCCRP's Neurotrauma Portfolio and session moderator. "We need to stay at the leading edge of innovation."

That desire is shared by the DOD, which, after witnessing more than 347,000 cases of TBI across all service branches since 2000, has placed finding a method to quickly identify possible brain injuries at the top of their medical wish list.

"Bottom line, we're looking for something to fill a gap," said Whiting, "but we have to be calculating as well."

Yet the growing desire for a solution to an equally expanding problem also represents another balancing act. But while it is indeed impossible to rush the scientific process, there does exist a growing confidence within the military that a solution will be identified, developed, and deployed soon.

"That's what the U.S. military has always done," said Whiting. "We set goals and we accomplish them."

MHSRS is DOD's premier scientific annual meeting, which combines three previous conferences, including the former Advanced Technology Applications for Combat Casualty Care Conference; the Air Force Medical Service Medical Research Symposium; and the Navy Medicine Research Conference. By combining these conferences into one event, the meeting serves as a critical strategy session for leaders to set future milestones for the Department of Defense's deployment-related medical research programs, centered on the needs of the Warfighter.