

## Mass TBI Screening in VHA: Is There Evidence?

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Background: To help ensure that deployment-related problems do not go unidentified and untreated, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) developed screening processes specifically for Operations Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom, and New Dawn veterans. The primary purpose of the VHA's TBI screen is to case-identify symptomatic veterans with a history of mild TBI. In this presentation, we will review the existing scientific literature on VHA's TBI screening and evaluation program to provide a qualitative synthesis and critical review.

Methods: All studies of the VHA's screening and evaluation process were reviewed, both those involving primary data collection and those relying upon VHA administrative data. Diagnostic statistics were summarized and were also re-calculated using a hypothetical sample (using the positive screening rate and estimated population prevalence of TBI in VA).

Results: The TBI screen within VHA is administered to nearly every eligible patient. The majority of clinical presentations are deemed to be due to mental health and/or a combination of mental health and TBI factors. The screen has good internal consistency, variable test-retest reliability, and questionable validity, with poor agreement between the TBI screen and criterion standards overall. Specificity is generally good. When adjustments are made for actual positive screening rates in VA, sensitivity is poor (the screen misses 30 to 60% of TBI cases).

Conclusion: Questions remain about the validity of the TBI screen. Future research should address the utility of screening for TBI, as it is currently unknown whether TBI screening and evaluation processes improve patient outcomes.