



PREVENTING MUSCULOSKELETAL INJURIES

Musculoskeletal injuries, including tendonitis, ruptured discs, and ligament sprains, are the primary source of disability within the U.S. Military.¹ ² These injuries affect 900,000 service members annually, resulting in 2.4 million medical visits to Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) and accounting for \$548 million of indirect patient care costs.³ In addition, service members who sustain a prior musculoskeletal injury are at an increased risk for future injuries. Such injuries pose a detrimental impact to the deployment readiness of U.S. service members as well as the military's financial resources.

In 2014, MAJ Dan Rhon, MD, Director of Physical Therapy at the Center for the Intrepid (CFI) at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, TX, initiated a study that aims to identify risk factors for musculoskeletal injuries, emphasizing prevention strategies to decrease future injury reoccurrence. MAJ Rhon is evaluating physical performance results of service members who have sustained a musculoskeletal injury or have experienced a reoccurrence of a previous injury. In order to survey a diverse sampling of service members, MAJ Rhon's study established a cohort of injured active

duty service members who are being treated at different physical therapy clinics and MTFs around the nation. After discharge from their respective physical therapy programs, study participants continue to be evaluated for approximately one year in order to capture re-injury rates.

These efforts will inform the development of a standard predictive tool, the use of which will help doctors and physical therapists anticipate the risk of future musculoskeletal injuries in previously injured service members. The development of the standard predictive tool has the potential to guide the U.S. Military in streamlining injury prevention efforts to ensure service members an appropriate, safe, and rapid return to full duty. With further progress, this tool

could also be used by civilian populations to help those engaging in physical rehabilitation programs return to normal, active lifestyles.

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¹ *Songer TJ, LaPorte RE. Disabilities due to injury in the military. Am J Prev Med 2000;18:33-40.*
² *Lincoln AE, Smith GS, Amoroso PJ, Bell NS. The natural history and risk factors of musculoskeletal conditions resulting in disability among US Army personnel. Work 2002;18:99-113.*
³ *Musculoskeletal Conditions Per M2 Database Analysis for FY 2007. M2 Database, 2008.*

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