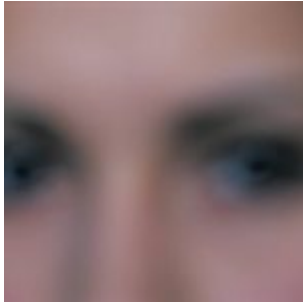


# The PTSD brain trauma of military rape



Military women may just as likely if not more so experience PTSD (*post traumatic stress disorder*) from sexual assault as combat trauma according to Dr. Kimberly Dennis, medical director of a major Illinois treatment center for women.

“Studies of women using the Veterans Administration health care system report that **28% experienced at least one sexual assault during military service.** Over half of enlisted women have experienced sexual harassment in the military, the reserves, and the National Guard, or suffered sexual assault or harassment during their service. The phenomenon, both “offender-known rape” (date rape) and “rape by rank,” actually has a name – “Military Sexual Trauma.”

<http://www.examiner.com/women-s-health-in-chicago/ptsd-women-s-oldiers-combat-stress-or-rape>

Dr. Dennis has determined from her clinical experience that many cases PTSD symptoms can jointly occur with other mental health problems for women which include –

- eating disorders
- depression
- alcohol/drug abuse
- self-mutilation
- suicide

The brain’s response to traumatic events such as rape and combat trauma is still not fully understood but research suggests changes in neurotransmitter response with greater amounts of adrenalin for arousal and lesser amounts of cortisol stress reduction leading to hyperarousal and

hypervigilance.

Also three major area of the brain – the prefrontal cortex, the amygdale and the hippocampus are abnormally activated.

- the prefrontal cortex attempts to regulate the emotional response of higher levles of fear and stress
- the amygdale attempts to sort the intensity of the emotional memories of how and where they are stored
- the hippocampus attempts to consolidate the events into long term memory

All three areas on emotionally linked as part of the **trauma memory system that triggers the physical sensations and memory recall** whether it be as a vivid flashback, a memory fragment or a total memory suppression.

For women serving in the military it is their job. Having to go to work everyday with the possibility incurring rape raises the level of fear, stress, anxiety and consequently PTSD.

“...The BBC recently reported on *The Lonely Soldier: The Private War of Women Serving in Iraq* by Helen Benedict. [as quoted] ...

*Army specialist Chantelle Henneberry spoke of some of her experiences in Iraq, “Everybody’s supposed to have a battle buddy in the army, and females are supposed to have one to go to the latrines with, or to the showers – that’s so you don’t get raped by one of the men on your own side. But because I was the only female there, I didn’t have a battle buddy. My battle buddy was my gun and my knife.”*

<http://womenslawproject.wordpress.com/2009/11/05/female-soldiers-and-ptsd-%E2%80%9Cpeople-underestimate-what-these-women-have-been-through%E2%80%9D/>

by Joyce Hansen