

5 things you must know about this groundbreaking treatment for servicemen and women

(BPT) - When the nation's servicemen and women serve a tour of duty overseas, many don't return home the same.

Nearly 60 percent of servicemen and 50 percent of servicewomen experience at least one traumatic event during their service, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs. These events have the potential to cause life-long complications.

Research shows the consequences of a traumatic event has the potential to impact a person's cognitive ability through traumatic brain injury (TBI), or to cause them to suffer from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Either of these conditions means that even when the service persons tour is over, their struggles have just begun.

Fortunately for service people dealing with the effects of TBI and PTSD, new treatments are available. Hyperbaric oxygen therapy is easing the pain for many servicemen and women through an increase in oxygen to combat problems ranging from complex disabilities and chronic infections to pain and neurological impairment.

If you've never heard of hyperbaric oxygen therapy, here are five things you need to know about this new treatment and how it is helping servicemen and women across the country.

- * The treatment is built on speed and oxygen. When a patient undergoes hyperbaric oxygen therapy, their body is exposed to a high amount of oxygen, carried through their body at a rapid pace. This alternative medicine therapy not only increases the amount of oxygen the body receives, but the purity of the oxygen as well. The increase of oxygen aides the patient's body in the creation of new blood cells which supports the healing process.

- * In addition to supporting the healing process, it also combats stress. Research shows hyperbaric oxygen therapy has been proven to alleviate stress on the body through cognitive rehabilitation, making it a natural treatment solution for servicemen and women suffering not only from external wounds, but from PTSD, TBI and depression as well.

- * The treatment process involves several dives." Each hyperbaric oxygen therapy treatment is called a dive and an individual can receive 20-40 dives in which oxygen is pumped into their specialized, sealed chamber. Each treatment lasts for up to one hour. Servicemen and women pursuing this treatment see the best results when these treatments are scheduled as close together as possible.

- * The risk of TBI varies depending on conditions. Many veterans of the United States campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan suffered TBI because of blast related injuries. Research shows males outnumber females in TBI cases 2:1. Age also plays a role in a

person's likeliness to suffer TBI, and people ages 0-4, 15-19 and the elderly have a higher rate of suffering TBI than those outside of those age ranges. Substance abusers also stand a greater chance of suffering a TBI incident.

* You can support treatment for servicemen and women. Veterans across the country need your help. The Purple Heart Foundation strives to make the transition home as smooth as possible for all veterans, which includes providing them the treatment they need for the challenges they face after being discharged.

The Purple Heart Foundation is a nonprofit, Veteran Service Organization whose mission is to honor the sacrifice of military veterans and create a smooth transition for them from the battlefield to the home front. Nearly 90 percent of each cash donation made to the Purple Heart Foundation goes to support aspects of this mission statement including: hyperbaric oxygen treatment, the National Service Officer Program, the scholarship program, service dog programs and other rehabilitation or recreational programs aimed at improving the lives of veterans. To learn more about how you can support veterans returning from overseas, visit purpleheartfoundation.org.