

Title of Presentation:

Return to Duty Rate of Amputee Soldiers in the Current Conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq

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Learning Objectives (After attending this session, the attendee should be able to):

- identify what demographic data contribute to soldiers returning to active duty
- have a better understanding of the rehabilitation process that amputee soldiers undergo prior to returning to active duty.

OBJECTIVES:

The purpose of this study is to determine the percentage of amputee soldiers who sustained their injury during the current conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq that have returned to active duty. In addition, the authors hope to identify factors that influence the amputee's likelihood to return to active duty.

METHODS:

The computerized records of soldiers who presented to the Physical Evaluation Board between 1 October 2001 and 1 June 2006 were reviewed. From this database the following variables were extracted for analysis: age, gender, pay grade, amputation level, and final disposition. Amputation levels were consolidated into the following categories: multiple, above elbow, below elbow, hand, above knee, below knee, and foot. Pay grades were grouped into three categories: E1-E4, E5-E9 and W1-08. Three final dispositions after a Physical Evaluation Board allow the soldier to remain on active duty: fit for duty, return to duty, and continue of active duty. In addition, for soldiers who underwent more than one board for an amputation, the final board was the only one included within the study.

RESULTS:

During the period reviewed, there were approximately 450 major limb amputations. Of those, nearly 15% of amputee soldiers returned to active duty, obtaining a final disposition of fit for duty, return to duty or continue on active duty.

CONCLUSION:

After the First Gulf War, 11 of 469 amputees returned to active duty (2.3%). When compared to the previous conflict, the number of amputees returning to duty has increased significantly from 2.3% to nearly 15%. This can be attributed to significant advancements in the treatment of the combat casualty, the rigorous rehabilitation process they undergo and development of advanced centers for amputee care.