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COMBAT STRESS INJURY MARKERS PREDICTING PTSD: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FROM IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS OF COMBAT MEDICS BETWEEN DEPLOYMENTS

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US Army Combat Medics and Navy Combat Corpsmen serve as a critical element of any fighting unit. Their professional responsibilities are for providing the emergency and preventive medical needs of their soldiers with whom they live and serve. These medical professionals are also expected to do any job that maintains the mission of their fighting unit. Because of their importance to sustaining the US fighting forces, Combat Medics may be an ideal group to study because of the high levels of adversity and stress endured while serving both roles. The Medic Mettle Study was established to develop a model of combat stress resilience and a prevention of PTSD. The first step was to identify the psychosocial and bio-behavioral characteristics of combat stress injury. A mixed methods model was utilized and over 700 recently deployed Combat Medics were enrolled. The presentation discusses both the early quantitative results and elaborates on the qualitative interviews conducted with the most resilient combat medics, as nominated by their peers. Preliminary findings of the 16 intensive, videotaped interviews with Combat Medics between war deployments using a Variable Generating Activity (VGA) protocol

- (1) found 138 variables that appear to provide some missing pieces in our understanding of combat stress injury and its psychosocial markers;
- (2) Identified five variable domains within a nomothetic network of medic resilience;
- (3) utility of annual surveys to validate the qualitative findings.