

SUBJECT: ALARACT 173/2008
TEXT:
UNCLASSIFIED//

THIS MESSAGE HAS BEEN SENT BY THE PENTAGON TELECOMMUNICATIONS CENTER ON BEHALF OF DA WASHINGTON DC//DASG-ZXA//DAMO-DASG//

THIS ALARACT MESSAGE IS SENT ON BEHALF OF THE SURGEON GENERAL//

SUBJECT: (U) PRE-DEPLOYMENT AND APPROPRIATE IN-THEATER BRAIN FUNCTION TESTING FOR CONCUSSION

REF/A/MESSAGE/HQDA/DASG-HCA/DTG 272213ZJUL06/SUBJECT: CONCUSSION IN SOLDIERS ON THE BATTLEFIELD// REF/B/MESSAGE/HQDA/DASG-ZXA/DTG 152035ZJUN07/SUBJECT: DOCUMENTING BLAST EXPOSURE/INJURY IN THEATER MEDICAL RECORDS// REF/C/HEALTH AFFAIRS MEMO/BASELINE PRE-DEPLOYMENT NEUROCOGNITIVE FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT - INTERIM GUIDANCE/28 MAY 08//

1. (U) SOLDIERS INVOLVED IN A BLAST, FALL, VEHICLE CRASH OR DIRECT IMPACT WHO HAVE AN ALTERATION OR LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS MUST BE CAREFULLY EVALUATED BY A LICENSED MEDICAL PROVIDER AS SOON AFTER THE EVENT AS TACTICALLY POSSIBLE. MEDICAL PROVIDERS HAVE TOOLS AVAILABLE TO EVALUATE SOLDIERS WHO MAY HAVE SUSTAINED A CONCUSSION, ALSO KNOWN AS MILD TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (MTBI). CONCUSSION MAY SEVERELY IMPAIR SOLDIER COMBAT EFFECTIVENESS LEADING TO POOR MARKSMANSHIP, DELAYED REACTION TIME AND DECREASED CONCENTRATION. A CLINICAL EXAMINATION, IN CONJUNCTION WITH TESTING OF BRAIN FUNCTION, WILL HELP MEDICAL PERSONNEL DETERMINE THE EXTENT OF CONCUSSION AND TRACK RECOVERY. TOOLS ARE AVAILABLE IN THEATER TO ASSESS SOLDIER BRAIN FUNCTION.

2. (U) WHEN CONCUSSION IS SUSPECTED, THE PRIMARY TOOL FOR ASSESSMENT IS THE MILITARY ACUTE CONCUSSION EVALUATION (MACE). THE MACE MAY BE ADMINISTERED BY ANY MEDICAL PERSONNEL AND TRAINING IS AVAILABLE. ITS USE IS MOST APPROPRIATE AS PART OF AN INITIAL RETURN TO DUTY EVALUATION AT LEVEL 1, 2, AND 3 MEDICAL FACILITIES. AN ALGORITHM FOR USE OF THE MACE AND ALL FURTHER STEPS TO EVALUATE SOLDIERS WITH CONCUSSION ARE DELINEATED IN THE "PRIMARY CARE MANAGEMENT OF CONCUSSION (MTBI) IN A DEPLOYED SETTING" CLINICAL PRACTICE GUIDELINE WHICH WILL BE POSTED IN THE THEATER MEDICAL DATA SYSTEM (TMDS) SOON. MACE TEST RESULTS, INCLUDING THE MACE SCORE, MUST BE RECORDED IN THE NOTES SECTION OF AHLTA-T.

3. (U) CONCUSSION PATIENTS WHOSE SYMPTOMS OR SIGNS PERSIST BEYOND SEVEN DAYS REQUIRE REFERRAL TO A LEVEL 2 OR 3 FACILITY FOR FURTHER NEUROCOGNITIVE EVALUATION. ALTHOUGH PROVIDERS MAY USE OTHER NEUROCOGNITIVE TOOLS, DEPENDING ON THEIR TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE, USE OF THE AUTOMATED NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT METRICS (ANAM) IS STRONGLY ENCOURAGED. THE ANAM IS A COMPUTER-BASED TOOL WHICH MEASURES SEVERAL ASPECTS OF BRAIN FUNCTION AND TAKES ABOUT TWENTY MINUTES TO COMPLETE. THE ANAM MAY BE PERFORMED AT LEVEL 2 AND 3 THEATER FACILITIES APPROVED BY THE MNFI/MNCI SURGEON. INTERPRETATION OF THE ANAM REPORT WILL BE DONE ONLY BY TRAINED PROVIDERS (E.G., PSYCHOLOGISTS OR NEUROLOGISTS WITH SPECIFIC ADDITIONAL ANAM TRAINING). LIKE THE MACE, THE ANAM IS TO BE USED SELECTIVELY AS A POST-INJURY MANAGEMENT TOOL IN CONJUNCTION WITH A FOCUSED CLINICAL EXAMINATION TO GUIDE RETURN TO DUTY RECOMMENDATIONS. BOTH THE MACE AND THE ANAM ARE POTENTIALLY INFLUENCED BY MULTIPLE FACTORS IN A COMBAT ENVIRONMENT (E.G., SLEEP DEPRIVATION, FATIGUE, PAIN, HUNGER). ADDITIONALLY, THE MACE HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE MEMORIZED IN ADVANCE, AND SOLDIERS MAY DENY SYMPTOMS, LEADING TO FALSE NEGATIVE EVALUATIONS. HOWEVER, ALTERNATE VERSIONS OF THE MACE ARE NOW AVAILABLE IN THEATER.

4. (U) THE ANAM SOFTWARE PRODUCES A PERFORMANCE REPORT WHICH INCLUDES A COMPARISON WITH EITHER AN INDIVIDUAL SOLDIER'S BASELINE SCORE (IF AVAILABLE) OR MILITARY NORMATIVE SCORES. THE DATE THAT AN ANAM WAS PERFORMED AND A SUMMARY OF ITS RESULTS SHOULD BE RECORDED IN THE NOTES SECTION OF AHLTA-T. BASELINE ANAM SCORES (CURRENTLY AVAILABLE FOR MOST DEPLOYED BRIGADE COMBAT TEAMS) WILL BE AVAILABLE IN TMDS NLT 1 SEP 08. THE ANAM4 TBI BATTERY USER MANUAL (C-SHOP, UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA) AND ANAM TRAINING MATERIALS ARE IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST FROM THE OFFICE OF THE SURGEON GENERAL.

5. (U) PRE-DEPLOYMENT BASELINE COGNITIVE TESTING BY USE OF ANAM WILL BE REQUIRED FOR ALL DEPLOYING SERVICE MEMBERS WITHIN 12 MONTHS OF DEPLOYMENT, AS OF 28 JUL 08. ANAM TESTING FOR DEPLOYING BRIGADE COMBAT TEAMS IS AVAILABLE NOW THROUGH THE OFFICE OF THE SURGEON GENERAL. THIS CAPABILITY WILL BE EXPANDED, TO INCLUDE THE FORT BENNING CONUS REPLACEMENT CENTER, WITHIN THE NEXT TWO MONTHS. HAVING BASELINE ANAM TESTS AVAILABLE FOR COMPARISON IS RECOMMENDED, BUT NOT REQUIRED, TO AID IN INTERPRETATION OF POST-INJURY ANAM TESTS FOR INDIVIDUAL SOLDIERS IN THEATER.

6. (U) POC: COL PAUL R. CORDTS, DIRECTOR, HEALTH POLICY AND SERVICES, OFFICE OF THE SURGEON GENERAL, COM: (703) 681-0104 OR E-MAIL PAUL.CORDTS@AMEDD.ARMY.MIL.

7. (U) EXPIRATION DATE CANNOT BE DETERMINED.