



Contact:
Deborah Ervin
Center for International Rehabilitation
dervin@cirnetwork.org
312.280.4970 x247

DARPA Selects Center for International Rehabilitation To Launch Healing Heroes Initiative:

Aiding Service members and their families suffering from psychological illnesses

Washington, DC (March 24, 2011)—The Center for International Rehabilitation (CIR) has been awarded a contract by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) to be one of the contributors on its “Healing Heroes” Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) on web-based approaches for medical and psychological health social networking, care delivery/telehealth, and informatics for Service members and their families suffering from psychological illnesses including traumatic brain injury (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

At present, a large percentage of Service members returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan suffer clinical levels of major depressive disorder, PTSD, and/or the effects of TBI. Studies have reported rates ranging from 18%-42% have serious psychological health challenges. Many more suffer at subclinical levels. Challenges remain to connect those in need with world-class medical and psychological health services and to destigmatize the psychological health process. The CIR will leverage its expertise in the development of international online networking communities and Internet-based training courses by designing and developing social networking capabilities, and developing material on PTSD and TBI to provide education and self-help to Service personnel, and to serve as rehabilitative training material for clinicians. These elements will be created with an eye toward ease of use and integration so that the environment is informative and engaging to users. The Healing Heroes program will also provide medical providers and planners with critical informatics aimed at identifying psychological health trends and problems across the Department of Defense (DoD) and help inform and develop new and innovative programs to improve care.

The two year program will commence in mid March 2011, with an anticipated live date in Summer 2013.

“We are looking forward to unveiling what we believe is a highly innovative approach that brings the best of care together with the latest technology,” stated Demetrios Sapounas, PhD, Chief Technology Officer of CIR, “We also hope that the educational material on post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, and other conditions will be used as an online resource that military personnel and their families will turn to for information and available services.”

The Center for International Rehabilitation (CIR) is a non-profit organization that conducts research, raises awareness, and promotes action to improve the quality and advancement of medical and rehabilitation services worldwide. While working to empower individuals with disabilities and their communities, CIR programs also seek to expand treatment options for those who do not have access to specialty care. iCons in Medicine is a program of the CIR that aims to alleviate health disparities through a global telehealth and humanitarian medicine volunteer alliance. It uses the Internet to connect healthcare providers in remote or medically underserved areas with a network of specialty physicians who provide expertise and advice on difficult cases. For more information on the programs of the CIR, please visit our website at www.cirnetwork.org.

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