



For Information Contact:

Eve Herold, 703-907-8640

press@psych.org

Jaime Valora, 703-907-8562

jvalora@psych.org

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Military Mental Health a Focus of Mental Illness Awareness Week

ARLINGTON, Va. (September 29, 2009) – In recognition of Mental Illness Awareness Week, October 4 – 10, the American Psychiatric Association is holding its annual symposium on Capitol Hill this Wednesday, September 30, with the National Alliance on Mental Illness to raise public awareness of and reduce the stigma of mental illnesses.

This year the symposium will focus on military mental health and is titled “Supporting Our Troops: New Research on Suicide and Substance Use Disorder.” The discussion will include experts on the latest military mental health research: John Mann, M.D., director of the National Institute of Mental Health Conte Center for the Neuroscience of Mental Disorders, and Tim Condon, Ph.D., deputy director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

The symposium will be held Wednesday, September 30 from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. in Room B-338 of the Rayburn House Office Building.

Dr. Mann will discuss the recent National Institute of Mental Health-Army Suicide study, which is the largest study of suicide and mental health among military personnel ever undertaken. The study aims to identify risk factors for suicide among soldiers and provide a science base for effective and practical interventions to reduce suicide rates and address associated mental health problems.

Dr. Condon will be speaking about the National Institute on Drug Abuse’s partnership with the military and the Department of Veterans Affairs to reduce substance use, which includes studies on smoking cessation and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, behavioral interventions for those with multiple mental illnesses, and virtual reality treatment of PTSD and substance abuse. NIDA is also working with Veterans Affairs on a protocol concept on the treatment of PTSD and substance use in veteran populations.

The event will be hosted by the APA’s CEO and Medical Director, James H. Scully, Jr., M.D., and a keynote will be given by Rep. John Fleming, M.D., (R-La.), who has served a number of years in the Navy as a physician and has expertise with depression, attention deficit disorders and substance abuse. He also authored a book on early prevention of substance abuse.

The American Psychiatric Association is the nation’s leading medical specialty society whose more than 38,000 physician members specialize in prevention, diagnosis, treatment and research of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at www.psych.org and www.HealthyMinds.org.

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