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Nov. 8, 2021

LIFE-CHANGING, COMPREHENSIVE CARE AT OHIO STATE'S NEW MILITARY MEDICINE PROGRAM

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Wounded military service members from across the country are getting specialized, life-changing care at the new [Military Medicine Program](#) at [The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center](#) and [College of Medicine](#).

The program brings together a team of advanced reconstructive surgeons, military specialists and rehabilitation experts to help restore the health and well-being of severely injured military members. They address complicated combat injuries sustained during modern warfare and extended conflicts. Increasingly, troops have suffered severe injuries from improvised explosive devices that shatter bones, tear limbs and damage muscles and nerves. Survivors often suffer from uniquely debilitating wounds that can require a lifetime of physical and mental care.

"I knew early on in my career that I wanted to dedicate my research and skills to helping those who served in the military," said [Dr. Amy Moore](#), chair of the [Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery](#) at the Ohio State Wexner Medical Center and a peripheral nerve surgeon. "There's more to living than just being alive, and with this program we are really focused on helping service members thrive. It's an honor to be able to give back to these amazing men and women who are in pain or are living with an injury suffered while serving our country."

Using leading-edge procedures and technologies, the team of reconstructive surgeons, peripheral nerve surgeons, microsurgeons, neuroplastic surgeons, orthoplastic surgeons, rehabilitation experts and other multidisciplinary specialists work together to provide individualized, comprehensive care. They're advancing relief of nerve pain through innovative reconstruction and rewiring of nerves. Moore said they developed a new procedure to improve prosthetics by anchoring them into the bone rather than bearing weight on a socket. These types of advancements are reducing chronic pain, increasing mobility and improving the lives of combat-wounded veterans.

"Communication is a key feature of the program. No injury is the same, so we have to think creatively to come up with the solution that is best suited to the individual patient, and then construct a plan that best leverages our surgical capabilities," said [Dr. Jason Souza](#), director of the Orthoplastic Reconstruction Program and associate professor in plastic and orthopedic surgery at the Wexner Medical Center. "Once we've identified a need, we look at what tissues we have to work with, assess how best to apply new technology, and then we try our best to use both to restore function and improve pain management."

The Military Medicine Program is already having a major impact on veterans like Nick Vogt. He lost both legs after an IED exploded while he was leading his platoon in Afghanistan in 2011. Even after recovering, daily life was extremely difficult and he couldn't sit upright for more than a few minutes at a time. Finally, he found Souza who performed a 12-hour surgery that changed his life, allowing him to be more engaged with his wife and two children every day.

"For years I couldn't even enjoy a meal with my family without having to lay on my side because there was just skin on bone under my pelvis, which easily degrades and is very painful," Vogt said. "Dr. Souza was able to take a flap of skin from my back, along with layers of fat and the vessels underneath, and put that under my pelvis where I needed the padding."

Post-surgical recovery for patients like Vogt is customized to meet individual care needs, such as amputee rehabilitation, neurological rehabilitation, physical therapy of lower and upper extremities and specialty hand therapy. For especially challenging injuries, experts may recommend support groups or personalized counseling.

Souza, a Navy physician who was recruited from Walter Reed National Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., said Ohio State is the perfect location for establishing a military medicine program. Ohio is home to one of the nation's largest veteran communities, and almost 500 military members or veterans work at the Wexner Medical Center.

"My military experience has left me with a lasting commitment to do everything in my power to ensure that our wounded warriors get the quality care that they deserve. We all owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to those who chose to serve our country and sustained combat or training injuries. Their patience, perseverance, courage and determination to push the boundaries of what can be achieved through reconstructive surgery has reshaped the conversation for all patients presented with a devastating injury or illness," Souza said. "Technology and techniques that were born out of the last two decades of military conflict have been widely applied to cancer and civilian trauma care. The Ohio State University is well positioned to return the favor, by offering these veterans state-of-the-art care."

Research grants from the U.S. Department of Defense and other federal agencies are enhancing the military medicine program, which is also designed to educate more providers on how to treat complex combat injuries.

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