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## Army phasing in new program to screen for PTSD

By [Charlie Coon](#), Stars and Stripes

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Active-duty soldiers can expect to be asked how they're doing, and not just physically, the next time they visit Army clinics in Vicenza, Italy, and Vilseck and Schweinfurt, Germany.

The three clinics are phasing in a program called RESPECT-MIL in which primary-care doctors routinely screen patients for post-traumatic stress disorder.

The three communities, along with 12 Army bases in the United States where the program is used, are sites with high concentrations of troops who have been deployed to war zones.

"These are the most likely areas for a high level of referrals for PTSD and depression," said Dr. (Lt. Col.) Raymond L. Gundry, deputy commander of outlying clinics at the Heidelberg, Germany-based Europe Regional Medical Command.

The program — its full name is Re-Engineering Systems for the Primary Care and Treatment of Depression and PTSD in the Military — is expected to go Army-wide in the future, Gundry said.

For now, officials at the RESPECT-MIL headquarters in Fort Bragg, N.C., are holding teleconferences every two weeks with the 15 original sites to evaluate how the program is going so far, Gundry said.

PTSD is an anxiety disorder that develops after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal, according to the National Institute for Mental Health.

The Army program was adopted from a civilian one used to

also treat non-military PTSD, such as from disasters, automobile accidents and violent personal assaults.

The programs include primary care and behavioral health managers, a nurse-care manager to coordinate treatment and an administrative assistant.

To screen patients, a clinic doctor would ask a patient if he is experiencing two common PTSD symptoms — trouble sleeping and feeling down. If a patient answers "yes" to either, the doctor would ask further questions and, depending on how the patient scored, explain options for possible treatment.

"I think it's a great idea," said Estela Gonzales, the administrative assistant for Vicenza's RESPECT-MIL program.

Vicenza will soon be receiving several thousand soldiers who are returning from Afghanistan after serving a 15-month tour. Gonzales said about 15 soldiers are currently in Vicenza's PTSD treatment program, which was launched last month.

Most, she said, were identified during the Army reintegration program immediately upon returning to Vicenza, but several were noticed during routine checkups using RESPECT-MIL techniques.

"A lot of people will deny (symptoms) just because they don't want to go through behavioral health (offices)," Gonzales said. "But when it's through primary care and not behavioral health ... they'll say, 'Yes, I need help.'"

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