

PTSD

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over the four-year period.”

The research is being conducted with partners at the Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center in Sioux Falls and the Veteran Health Care System in Bay Pines, Fla.

Simons and Gaher are also working with a behavioral geneticist at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, an electrochemical engineering firm in Boston and a leading expert in longitudinal modeling at the University of California-Davis.

The researchers are studying the link between traumatic stress and health, Simons said.

“The subjects give us a saliva sample for the genetics study, which is related to specific neurotransmitters in the brain,” he said. “It’s not like there’s a gene for PTSD. It’s more related to reactivity and control. We are looking at self-regulation and emotions.”

The researchers are also studying a veteran’s surroundings. They are examining social, psychological and environmental factors. In turn, those factors contribute to individual differences in resilience and vulnerability.

“Some of what we do tries to look at what extent someone is isolated or in supportive — and non-supportive — relationships,” Simons said.

The project uses advanced data collection, including real-time monitoring of veterans’ behavior with palmtop computers.

“We get assessments of their behavior on a day-to-day basis,” he said. “We understand the factors that contribute to their patterns of good days and bad days. We understand the factors that lead to positive growth over time.”

Using the palmtop computers, the veterans answer specific questions on a variety of topics, Simons said.

“We have a whole series of questions that provide a rating to their various moods, and we ask about their symptoms,” he said. “It’s programmed to ask them questions at a random time throughout the day, and it records data. We are able to quantify things.”

The veterans are asked about their experiences at the moment, Simons said.

“We start off asking where the person is at in a given point in time. Are they at work or at home? What is their social environment like? Whether they are with people or not?” he said. “We also ask questions about experiences that might have reminded them of the war.”

The real-time information, along with the randomness of the calls, provide a much clearer picture than asking veterans to remember past moods, Simons said.

“People have all kinds of biases in how they recall information. If you ask them today, ‘How was your week?’, in part they will be influenced by how they are today,” he said. “By knowing how they are feeling in each point in time, we can quantify it as opposed to getting your perceptions about a more remote time.”

After one to two weeks, the South Dakota veterans come to the USD campus in Vermillion or to a VA office in Sioux Falls to download their data. The veterans are also interviewed, giving researchers a chance for face-to-face interaction.

The Florida veterans visit offices in their state, Simons said, noting Gaher has contacts among the Florida researchers.

“By having both South Dakota and Florida, we have a wider variety of subjects and we’re able to have a sufficient number of people,” Simons said. “It’s more inclusive and adds to the study.”

The researchers will start recruiting subjects in the near future, Simons said.

“We have referrals from within the VA system and are also using advertisements and local media,” he said. “Another way is we try to access various veterans groups directly. We’re trying to cast a wide net.”

The study will hopefully create better awareness of PTSD, defined as a reaction to severe stress, Simons said. In that respect, the research can create a wide-ranging impact for future generations.

“This study will help veterans not only now but in the future,” Simons said.

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Petraeus

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Obama said in a statement that the retired general had provided “extraordinary service to the United States for decades” and had given a lifetime of service that “made our country safer and stronger.” Obama called him “one of the outstanding general officers of his generation.”

The president said that CIA Deputy Director Michael Morell would serve as acting director. Morell was the key CIA aide in the White House to President George W. Bush during the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks.

“I am completely confident that the CIA will continue to thrive and carry out its essential mission,” Obama said.

The resignation comes at a sensitive time. The administration and the CIA have struggled to defend security and intelligence lapses before the attack that killed the U.S. ambassador to Libya and three others. It was an issue during the presidential campaign that ended with Obama’s re-election Tuesday.

The CIA has come under intense scrutiny for providing the White House and other administration officials with talking points that led them to say the Benghazi attack was a result of a film protest, not a militant terror attack. It has become clear that the CIA was aware the attack was distinct from the film protests roiling across other parts of the Muslim world.

Morell rather than Petraeus now is expected to testify at closed congressional briefings next week on the Sept. 11 attacks on the consulate in Benghazi.

For the director of the CIA, being engaged in an extramarital affair is considered a serious breach of security and a counterintelligence threat. If a foreign government had learned of the affair, the reasoning goes, Petraeus or the person with whom he was involved could have been blackmailed or otherwise compromised. Military justice considers conduct such as

an extramarital affair to be possible grounds for court martial.

Failure to resign also could create the perception for the rank-and-file that such behavior is acceptable.

At FBI headquarters, spokesman Paul Bresson declined to comment on the information that the affair had been discovered in the course of an investigation by the bureau.

Holly Petraeus is known for her work helping military families. She joined the new Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to set up an office dedicated to helping service members with financial issues.

Though Obama made no direct mention of Petraeus’ reason for resigning, he offered his thoughts and prayers to the general and his wife, saying that Holly Petraeus had “done so much to help military families through her own work. I wish them the very best at this difficult time.”

Petraeus, who became CIA director in September 2011, was known as a shrewd thinker and hard-charging competitor. His management style was recently lauded in a Newsweek article by Paula Broadwell, co-author of the biography, “All In: The Education of General David Petraeus.”

The article listed Petraeus’ “rules for living.” No. 5 was: “We all make mistakes. The key is to recognize them, to learn from them, and to take off the rear view mirrors — drive on and avoid making them again.”

Petraeus told his CIA employees that he treasured his work with them “and I will always regret the circumstances that brought that work with you to an end.”

The director of national intelligence, James Clapper, said Petraeus’ departure represented “the loss of one of our nation’s most respected public servants. From his long, illustrious Army career to his leadership at the helm of CIA, Dave has redefined what it means to serve and sacrifice for one’s country.”

Other CIA directors have resigned under unflattering circumstances.

CIA Director Jim Woolsey left over the discovery of a KGB mole and director John Deutch left after

the revelation that he had kept classified information on his home computer.

Before Obama brought Petraeus to the CIA, he was credited with salvaging the U.S. war in Iraq.

“His inspirational leadership and his genius were directly responsible - after years of failure - for the success of the surge in Iraq,” Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., said Friday.

President George W. Bush sent Petraeus to Iraq in February 2007, at the peak of sectarian violence, to turn things around as head of U.S. forces. He oversaw an influx of 30,000 U.S. troops and moved troops out of big bases so they could work more closely with Iraqi forces scattered throughout Baghdad.

Petraeus’ success was credited with paving the way for the eventual U.S. withdrawal.

After Iraq, Bush made Petraeus commander of U.S. Central Com-

mand, overseeing all U.S. military operations in the greater Middle East, including Afghanistan and Pakistan.

When the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, Gen. Stanley McChrystal, was relieved of duty in June 2010 for comments in a magazine story, Obama asked Petraeus to take over in Kabul and the general quickly agreed.

In the months that followed, Petraeus helped lead the push to add more U.S. troops to that war and dramatically boost the effort to train Afghan soldiers and police.

House Homeland Security Chairman Peter King, R-N.Y., said he regretted Petraeus’ resignation, calling him “one of America’s most outstanding and distinguished military leaders and a true American patriot.”

Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Dianne Feinstein also regretted the resignation but gave Morell high marks, too.

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