

Operator Syndrome

Frueh BC, Madan A, Fowler JC, Stomberg S, Bradshaw M, Kelly K, Weinstein B, Luttrell M, Danner SG, Beidel DC. "Operator syndrome": A unique constellation of medical and behavioral health-care needs of military special operation forces. Int J Psychiatry Med. 2020 Jul;55(4):281-295. doi: 10.1177/0091217420906659. Epub 2020 Feb 13. PMID: 32052666.

Main Points:

- Framework, not a diagnosis
- Causes:
 - o **Unique Brain Injury for Operators:** interface astroglial scarring from repeated exposure to blast injuries throughout training/deployment/career (not detectable on MRI)
 - o **High Allostatic Load**= operations tempo over 20 years, Loss of team members/friends, Stress on family

Please highlight symptoms you are experiencing:

Potential Referrals

Common Symptoms:

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Endocrine disturbances ie. Low Testosterone <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Problems with sexual health and intimacy o Decreased motivation and drive o Not feeling self anymore o Sleep Disturbance | ➡ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lab Referral for Blood Panel: Testosterone, Vitamin D - Endocrinologist |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sleep Disturbances & Obstructive Sleep Apnea <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Trouble falling asleep o Trouble staying asleep o Snoring/breathing issues o Feeling exhausted in the morning | ➡ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sleep Test |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pain <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Chronic joint/back pain o Other orthopedic problems | ➡ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appropriate imaging |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emotional & Mental Health Challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Depression & sadness o Anger o Worry and rumination o Feelings of guilt o Stress reactivity o Marital / Family issues o Hypervigilance “being on guard” & anxiety | ➡ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neuro-psych for comprehensive eval and/or - Mental health clinician |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cognitive Challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Short- and Long-Term Memory changes o Headaches o Concentration, Focus issues o Other cognitive impairments | ➡ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explore brain injury IOP clinics/referrals - Occupational Therapy specializing in brain injury - Speech Therapy specializing in brain injury - Neurologist and/or appropriate imaging |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vestibular impairment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Dizziness | ➡ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Physical Therapist specializing in vestibular rehab; Ear, Nose, Throat Doctor |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vision impairments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Overshooting eyes when tracking ▪ Blurry vision | ➡ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neuro-ophthalmologist for diagnosing or - Occupational Therapist specializing in brain injury rehab |