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For Immediate Release:

New Fact Sheets on the Impact of Combat Injury on Intimacy

Bethesda, Md. — The impact of combat injury on intimacy is an important and often neglected aspect of healthcare communication. Four new fact sheets addressing the impact of the injuries of war, both physical and psychological, on intimacy have just been released for healthcare providers and affected military families. They are: *Intimacy and Health: The Impact of PTSD and Other Invisible Injuries on Returning Service Members* for providers, *Reintegration and Intimacy: The Impact of PTSD and Other Visible Injuries* for families; *Physical Injury and Intimacy: Helping Wounded Warriors and their Loved Ones Manage Relationship Challenges and Changes* for providers, *Physical Injury and Intimacy: Managing Relationship Challenges and Changes* for families.

These fact sheets, under the banner of Resources for Recovery, have been developed by the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress, part of the Department of Psychiatry of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences. The injury and intimacy fact sheets are part of a larger military health campaign called **Courage to Care Courage to Talk** (www.couragetotalk.org) that was launched in March of 2010 by the Center's Child & Family Program directed by Dr. Stephen Cozza and its Office of Public Education and Preparedness. **Courage to Care Courage to Talk** provides resources to military health treatment centers and organizations dedicated to wounded warrior care that educate about and facilitate communication around difficult topics involving the impact of combat injury on service members and families.

“Whether a returning service member is single, married or married with children, the capacity to resume and establish relationships that provide emotional closeness and sexual togetherness can enhance or undermine individual health, relationship health, and even the health of one's family,” as quoted from the fact sheets. The fact sheets include “tips” to help injured service members and their loved ones improve intimacy. Some of the tips are:

- ***Find ways to be close.*** Do thoughtful things for each other such as taking over a chore, leaving an affectionate note, or caring for the children so your partner can have some private relaxation time. Small expressions of affection, such as a hug, kiss, or touch on the shoulder, can go a long way.
- ***Talk about your feelings, hopes, and desires when you and your partner are both calm and ready to listen.*** Communicating, even about difficult topics, can help you feel more connected. In addition, understanding each other's perspective can help you work together to identify solutions.
- ***Get help.*** Talk to your doctor, mental health provider or community-based counselor. They may have ideas, treatment options, to include helpful medications. PTSD, depression, substance misuse, or any other problem that is getting in the way of your relationship requires professional help. Seek marital therapy as appropriate.

Learning to Care for Those in Harm's Way

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The fact sheets remind healthcare professionals that, “relationship intimacy is an important part of post-deployment health and reintegration. Ask about relationship intimacy. Sometimes patients are uncomfortable bringing up the topic, so service providers may need to start the conversation.”

The injury and intimacy fact sheets can be downloaded at: www.cstsonline.org as well as www.couragetotalk.org

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The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences is the nation's federal health sciences university. USU students are primarily active-duty uniformed officers in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Public Health Service who are being educated to deal with wartime casualties, emerging infectious diseases and other public health emergencies. Of the university's more than 4,500 physician alumni, the vast majority are supporting operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, offering their leadership and expertise. For more information, visit www.usuhs.mil.