



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Survey launched to better understand urogenital injuries in military**

**Iraq and Afghanistan veterans with combat trauma to genital, urinary, and reproductive areas asked to complete online survey to help future service members**

SAN ANTONIO – A research team of veteran and public health experts launched an online survey this week to better understand the long-term impact of urogenital combat injuries. Veterans who sustained injuries to the genital, urinary, or reproductive areas while serving in Iraq and Afghanistan after 2001 are strongly encouraged to take the survey to help fill a critical gap in medical research. The survey is available at <https://toughprogram.uthscsa.edu/>.

The research project, TOUGH (Trauma Outcomes and Urogenital Health), is funded by the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program and led by experts from the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, University of California Davis, and Brooke Army Medical Center. The project's goal is to gather the data medical professionals need to protect, treat, and care for service members who sustained genitourinary (GU) injuries. Currently, there is a severe lack of information about these injuries, compared to more common wounds.

“Patient surveys give us critical insight into the long-term outcomes of injuries that we simply cannot get by other means,” said Dr. Steven J. Hudak, an associate investigator for TOUGH. “While on active duty as an Army surgeon, I cared for a large number of service members who sustained GU wounds. They are proud Americans who have gone and continue to go above and beyond for their nation, and I encourage them all to contribute once more by taking this survey.”

Historically, GU wounds have been relatively rare. However, advancements in military medicine and the insurgent style of warfare in Iraq and Afghanistan caused a dramatic spike in these injuries, which more service members have survived.

Invitation letters about the survey are being sent this week to veterans whose records indicate they suffered GU injuries. The survey takes about an hour to complete.

Because mailing addresses may be out of date, or qualifying veterans may not be on list, the research team is asking for the military community's help in generating awareness of the project, including posting on social media with the hashtag #TalkTOUGH. All male and female veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom who sustained injuries to any organ or structure within their urinary (i.e., kidney, ureter, bladder, urethra), genital (i.e., penis, scrotum, vagina), or reproductive system (i.e., ovary, testicle, uterus) are encouraged to participate.

"Every submission will make a difference," said Hudak.

### **About TOUGH**

TOUGH (Trauma Outcomes & Urogenital Health) is a study funded by the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program and led by experts from the University of Texas Health Science Center San Antonio, University of California Davis, and Brooke Army Medical Center. The study is surveying service members who sustained urogenital injuries during Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom to determine how well individuals have recovered, if they are getting the care they need for their injuries, what life is like after a GU injury, and how to improve medical care for these injuries. Veterans may complete the survey now at <https://toughprogram.uthscsa.edu/>.