

Alan Peterson, PhD, ABPP – Groundbreaking Researcher and Psychologist Pioneering New Methods to Prevent, Detect, and Treat a Signature Wound of Post 9-11 Military Deployment: PTSD

Recipient of the 2018 BioMed SA Award for Innovation in Healthcare & Bioscience



Dr. Alan Peterson

Chief, Division of Behavioral Medicine, UT Health San Antonio; Director, STRONG STAR Consortium, the Consortium to Alleviate PTSD, and National Center for Warrior Resiliency. Colonel (select) Retired, USAF.

Selection committee rationale:

- As an Air Force clinical psychologist, he was among the first to recognize the need for evidence-based treatment for PTSD for active duty service members.
- While in the military, he adapted prolonged exposure therapy for PTSD for delivery in a combat zone with dramatic results, documented in the first published case study.
- After retiring from active duty and joining UT Health San Antonio, he assembled and led a nationwide coalition of military, VA and civilian investigators to conduct randomized clinical trials in military settings.
- The two nationwide consortia he now leads have advanced the quality of care for psychologically wounded warriors and influenced policy changes implemented by the DoD.
- The DoD has widely disseminated a suicide prevention intervention shown by consortia investigators to reduce suicide attempts dramatically among high-risk military personnel.

Alan L. Peterson, PhD, ABPP, is the nation's foremost research leader in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder and related conditions in active duty military personnel and veterans. His lifelong efforts have resulted in dramatic improvements in how to address one of the signature wounds of post 9-11 military deployments: PTSD.

During his 21 years of military service, Dr. Peterson deployed three times and was called upon to treat service members with PTSD in the combat theater. With no leading treatments designed or tested for this purpose, he nimbly and successfully adapted a leading civilian therapy called *prolonged exposure*. The results of the therapy for active-duty service members were dramatic and were documented in the first published case study on the treatment of PTSD in theater.

He retired from the Air Force in 2005 after serving as Chair of Psychology at Wilford Hall Medical Center and joined UT Health San Antonio as a civilian academic medical center investigator with a passion to drive major advances toward preventing a new generation of war veterans from developing chronic PTSD. Through his vision and leadership, Dr. Peterson has brought together a world-class team of more than 150 collaborating investigators from over 40 military, VA, and civilian institutions working through the STRONG STAR Consortium and the Consortium to Alleviate PTSD (CAP), the world's largest research consortia studying combat-related PTSD. The work of these consortia directed by Dr. Peterson involves over 50 research projects with over \$150 million in peer-reviewed research funding. Dr. Peterson also championed a proposal to establish the National Center for Warrior Resiliency at UT Health San Antonio, which became effective in September 2017. In June 2018, STRONG STAR was officially approved by The University of Texas System as an organized research unit at UT Health San Antonio.

Today, the group's impact is being felt nationwide. STRONG STAR and CAP have conducted several of the largest randomized clinical trials in history evaluating cognitive-behavioral treatments for PTSD and related disorders in active duty military personnel. They are the nation's only research group capable of conducting multiple, large-scale psychological health randomized clinical trials in military settings. With a number of seminal studies completed or nearing completion, Dr. Peterson's network has advanced the quality of care for psychologically wounded warriors and influenced policy changes that the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) already has implemented as a direct result of this work.