

# Army To Include AOM for Pain Treatment

Editorial Staff | DIGITAL EXCLUSIVE

The statistics are sobering, to say the least. According to [leading pain specialists](#) in the Veterans Administration, nine in 10 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans return home with some form of pain, and 60 percent have significant pain.<sup>1</sup> Now, a recent announcement by top Army officials may help address this situation and provide our modern military forces with ancient forms of healing to help with pain relief.

On June 25, the Army Surgeon General, Lt. Gen. Eric B. Schoomaker, announced the release of a report by the Pain Management Task Force, which has 109 recommendations for changes in the way Army personnel are treated for pain. Among those recommendations are the inclusion of complementary and alternative treatments such as acupuncture, meditation, biofeedback and yoga.

At a [press conference](#), Schoomaker stated that his goal is to form a pain-management strategy for Army personnel that is holistic, multidisciplinary and puts soldiers' quality of life first. He added, "Programs such as biofeedback and yoga have been subjected to scientific randomized trials and have been proven to be effective."

As *Acupuncture Today* has reported previously, the Army has used acupuncture and other alternative therapies to aid returning soldiers in dealing with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The most notable example of this is at the [Restoration and Resilience](#) program, located at Ft. Bliss, near El Paso, Texas.

Unfortunately, pain management is woefully far behind PTSD treatment. Part of the problem is that wounded soldiers are often prescribed multiple medications by multiple doctors, so there is no consistency of care. Furthermore, according to the recent Army report, pain treatment has changed very little overall since the discovery of morphine in 1805. According to Brig. Gen. Richard W. Thomas, assistant Army surgeon general, "This is a nation-wide problem ... we've got a culture of 'a pill for every ill.'"

In preparing the report, the task force visited 28 military, Veterans Affairs and civilian medical centers to observe treatment capabilities and best practices. Schoomaker said his goal is to form a pain-management strategy that is holistic, multidisciplinary and puts soldiers' quality of life first.

The 109 recommendations are divided into four areas: to provide tools and infrastructure that support pain management, build a full spectrum of best practices, focus on soldiers and families, and build pain awareness, education and intervention. Schoomaker said the recommendations that he is able to authorize will be implemented in the coming months, and Section 711 of the [2010 National Defense Authorization Act](#) calls for the integration of a pain-management policy into the military health care system no later than March 2011. Thomas added, "This is an opportunity to change medical care and the way we take care of patients."

*Acupuncture Today* will continue to follow this story and provide you with the latest information on efforts to use our medicine to aid those who serve our country.

*Reference*

1. [www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/188107.php](http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/188107.php)

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