

Study finds better helmets could prevent military brain injuries

On behalf of Johnston, Moore & Thompson

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The men and women who sacrifice their lives in order to serve the country deserve to be kept as safe as possible while they are on the job. Most of us understand that soldiers face health risks while serving in combat. We tend to worry about the more physically obvious types of injuries, like gunshot wounds and lost limbs.

But there is a less physically evident injury that needs to be addressed among our invaluable soldiers: [traumatic brain injury](#). A significant amount of service men and women sustain brain injuries during their service. In fact, the Los Angeles Times refers to a traumatic brain injury as the "signature wound" among those who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

A couple of researchers (one a physicist and the other a mechanical engineer) put their minds together to try to come up with a way to prevent future brain injuries among our U.S. soldiers. According to research, more than 130,000 service members who've served in Iraq and Afghanistan alone have fallen victim to traumatic brain injuries.

The researchers surprised themselves when their research revealed to them that the solution to such serious concussions was quite simple and inexpensive - a better helmet.

After comparing current military helmets to those used by football players and other athletes, the researchers reportedly found that the military helmet was the safest for soldiers. The helmet just needs a couple of minimal changes. First, the study suggests that soldiers would be safer if they wore slightly larger helmets. Secondly, the helmets would be even more effective brain injury prevention if there were only an extra one-eighth of an inch of padding inside.

Some soldiers reportedly worry about helmet changes meaning heavier helmets because the weight and size can make it harder to move on the field. Others, however, welcome the idea of safer helmets - larger size and all - with a passionate response. Those responsible for approving a helmet change and designing helmets will undoubtedly consider these different opinions and more when they meet to discuss the research in May.

Source

Los Angeles Times: "[Tweaked helmet would better protect our troop](#)," Tony Perry, 24 Apr. 2011