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**Red Sox Foundation, Mass General Team Up to Help Veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq Wars**  
*New Program to Target Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury*

BOSTON – The Red Sox Foundation and Massachusetts General Hospital today will announce a multifaceted initiative aimed at helping veterans of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq who are affected by post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI). Called the Red Sox Foundation and Massachusetts General Hospital Home Base Program, this new partnership, working in cooperation with the Department of Veterans Affairs, will:

- provide diagnosis and clinical care for veterans with PTSD and TBI;
- offer outreach and support services to families of affected veterans;
- conduct innovative research to deepen the understanding of the disorders and develop better treatments for them; and
- educate veterans, families and health care providers about diagnosis and treatment of these disorders.

Thousands of soldiers who have returned from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan struggle – often silently – with PTSD and TBI, referred to as “the invisible wounds of war.” According to a 2008 RAND Corporation study, one in five service members from these combat theaters suffers from depression or stress disorders, including PTSD. In addition, nearly 20 percent of veterans of these modern wars have experienced concussions or other traumatic brain injuries during their tours of duty. In total, one-fourth of returning servicemen and servicewomen will have considerable difficulty adjusting to civilian life.

These deployment-related disorders too often go undiagnosed and untreated because of the unfortunate stigma associated with the emotional and psychological scars of the combat experience. The Home Base Program seeks to reach out to veterans who have – or may have – PTSD and TBI to encourage them to get the vital care and services they need to begin the healing process.

“It takes tremendous courage for a veteran to step forward and ask for help,” says John A. Parrish, MD, director of Home Base, who served as a medical officer in the Marines Corps during the Vietnam War. “In New England alone, thousands of veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars who may be in rough shape psychologically avoid treatment because of this stigma. You see the devastating effects of PTSD and TBI in the growing rates of unemployment, substance abuse, homelessness and suicide among veterans. Home Base is committed to rebuilding lives, restoring families and finding better ways to treat these disorders.”

The idea for Home Base grew out of visits the Red Sox made to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington following the team's World Series victories in 2004 and 2007. During these visits, players, coaches and team officials met with servicemen and servicewomen afflicted with combat-related injuries, both physical and psychological. The connections between ballplayers and soldiers were powerful and poignant.

"Like many Americans, I found myself frustrated with the reality that so many of our recently returning veterans and their families are facing the additional challenge of PTSD and TBI as they're transitioning to civilian life," says Red Sox Chairman Tom Werner. "The Red Sox Foundation determined that we must find some way to use our unique position in New England to encourage those veterans to find meaningful help. We want every returning soldier, sailor or Marine who may be facing PTSD or TBI to know that Red Sox Nation respects them, cares about them and is offering a 'Home Base' where they and their families may find solutions that make their homecomings less challenging."

The Red Sox Foundation enlisted the assistance and advice of physicians from the MGH to help develop, plan and implement a program that would address some of the unmet mental health and family support needs of veterans. The late Sen. Edward Kennedy became a champion of the program and convened key officials from the Red Sox Foundation, Massachusetts General Hospital, Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense to discuss ways to coordinate with one another to serve the needs of more veterans and their families. Sen. Kennedy had been helping to shape and build Home Base for the past two years and was involved in the discussions right up until his death in late August 2009.

"From the start, Senator Kennedy saw the potential of these organizations working together to make a significant impact on the lives of so many veterans and their families in New England," says Peter L. Slavin, MD, president of the MGH. "The tremendous outreach of the Red Sox Foundation may prompt a reluctant veteran to take that all-important first step toward treatment. And when that happens, we will be ready to offer the clinical and scientific expertise of Mass. General and valuable support services to family members. These veterans, who risked their lives for our country, deserve so much more than just our profound gratitude. They deserve the very best care we can deliver and the most hope we can offer."

Slated to open early in 2010, the Home Base Clinic for veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan will provide diagnostic, treatment and referral services at Mass. General and through various community resources in cooperation with a wide array of programs provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The clinical program will offer a multidisciplinary approach to care and provide opportunities for veterans to participate in cutting-edge research protocols aimed at increasing understanding of PTSD, TBI and related disorders. Mark Pollack, MD, director of the Center for Anxiety and Traumatic Stress Disorders at MGH, serves as program leader of the Home Base Clinic.

The Home Base Family Support Program, which also will begin serving families in early 2010, will focus on helping children and spouses of military service members and veterans better cope with a parent or loved one who is experiencing serious problems adjusting and integrating into home life after deployment because of PTSD or TBI or other combat-related issues. Paula Rauch, MD, director of the Marjorie E. Korff PACT (Parenting At a Challenging Time) Program and chief of the Child Psychiatry Consultation Liaison Service at the MGH, serves as leader of the Home Base Family Support Program.

The Home Base Research Program is already under way, with a wide variety of ongoing PTSD and TBI studies at the MGH moving under the Home Base banner. The research component will draw upon the collaborative model used in the Center for the Integration of Medicine and Innovative Technology (CIMIT), a consortium of hospitals, universities and other organizations in which scientists from a range of disciplines share ideas, expertise and perspectives to find solutions to specific clinical problems. CIMIT consortium members include founding members MGH, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Draper Laboratories and the

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, along with Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Boston Medical Center, Boston University, Children's Hospital Boston, Harvard Medical School, Newton-Wellesley Hospital and VA Boston Healthcare System. Roger Pitman, MD, director of the MGH Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Psychophysiology Laboratory, is leader of the Home Base Research Program and heads up PTSD research, while Ross Zafonte, DO, chief of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at MGH and vice president for Medical Affairs at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital, leads the TBI research effort. The Home Base Research Program will augment ongoing research collaborations among the MGH, Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital and the VA Boston Healthcare System.

The Home Base Education Program will offer information and training through web-based learning and on-site seminars that will broaden the network of community providers trained to care for veterans with PTSD and TBI and their families. The program will use the educational resources available through the structure of the MGH Psychiatry Academy and the MGH Academy to reach health care professionals. The educational program will also provide interactive information, materials and resources for veterans and families. The curriculum is being designed in conjunction with experts from the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder at the VA Boston Healthcare System. Bob Birnbaum, MD, PhD, MGH psychiatrist and executive director of Postgraduate Medical Education, serves as Home Base Education Program leader.

The Red Sox Foundation and Massachusetts General Hospital Home Base Program will be formally announced during the pre-game ceremonies of the Sept. 17 Boston Red Sox-Los Angeles Angels game. The on-field ceremony will include leadership of the Red Sox Foundation, the MGH and the Home Base Program; US Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki; and ABC News anchor Bob Woodruff, who was injured in an explosion while on assignment in Iraq; and several veterans who have publicly shared their personal experiences with PTSD and TBI.

"The coordination of the Department of Veterans Affairs' programs with those of other departments and agencies, philanthropic and volunteer organizations, and with world-class foundations and volunteer groups, is critically important," says Shinseki. "When those efforts include distinguished institutions such as the Red Sox Foundation and Massachusetts General Hospital, veterans win."

PTSD is a debilitating condition that often follows terrifying physical or emotional experiences, causing persistent, frightening thoughts and memories, or flashbacks, of the ordeal. Common symptoms of PTSD are sleep problems, nightmares, irritability, violent outbursts, difficulty working or socializing, depression, lack of interest in activities and difficulty showing affection. TBI occurs when the brain is physically injured, which can occur in combat from the shock waves of a blast or explosion or from a sudden force that causes the brain to jolt backward and forward, hitting the skull and damaging the internal lining, tissues and blood vessels. Symptoms can include diminished motor function; impaired thinking abilities; reduced sensation; and impeded language and communication abilities.

For more information about the Red Sox Foundation and Massachusetts General Hospital Home Base Program, visit [www.homebaseprogram.org](http://www.homebaseprogram.org).

### **About the Red Sox Foundation**

The philanthropic arm of the Boston Red Sox team, the Red Sox Foundation is committed to using the power of Red Sox Nation to create new and strengthened community partnerships that will improve the lives of children, adults and families across New England. The Foundation's efforts are primarily focused on improving health, educational and recreational opportunities, as well as social service programs in urban neighborhoods. A 501(c)3 nonprofit, the Red Sox Foundation raises most of its funds through special events, donations from supporters and other fundraising activities. Founded and initially funded by the Red Sox and their partners, the Red Sox Foundation has won numerous awards for its innovative programs and impact in the community.

## **About Massachusetts General Hospital**

Founded in 1811, Massachusetts General Hospital is the third oldest general hospital in the United States and the oldest and largest teaching hospital of Harvard Medical School. Each year, the 907-bed academic medical center admits nearly 50,000 patients, performs more than 37,000 surgical procedures, delivers more than 3,600 babies and takes care of nearly 1.5 million patients in its extensive outpatient programs and Emergency Department on its main campus as well as in suburban ambulatory care centers and neighborhood health centers. The MGH conducts the largest hospital-based research program in the United States, with an annual research budget of \$550 million. In 1994, the MGH, along with Brigham and Women's Hospital, founded Partners HealthCare, an integrated health care delivery system that includes the two founding academic medical centers, community hospitals, primary care and specialty physicians, specialty hospitals, community health centers, nonacute services and other health-related entities. Mass General consistently ranks among the top few hospitals in the nation in the *U.S. News & World Report* best hospital survey, and the MGH was the first hospital in the state to be designated a Magnet hospital, the highest honor for nursing excellence.

## **About the VA Boston Healthcare System**

VA Boston Healthcare System (VABHS) provides comprehensive health care to more than 65,000 veterans and is the principal medical, surgical and mental health referral center for veterans from throughout New England. Care is provided at three major campuses, in Jamaica Plain, West Roxbury and Brockton, and six community outpatient clinics. The VABHS's comprehensive mental health services for veterans include highly specialized care for PTSD and TBI. The VABHS is home to two divisions of the National Center on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and a VA Center of Excellence on Traumatic Brain Injury and PTSD; VABHS investigators have developed two of the most widely used evidence-based treatments for PTSD. The VABHS is strongly affiliated with Harvard Medical School and the Boston University School of Medicine and provides training and research opportunities to more than 2,500 medical and nursing students, residents, fellows and allied health professionals. VABHS is home to one of the largest research programs in the national VA system.

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