

For Information Contact:

Lydia Sermons-Ward, 703-907-8640

press@psych.org

Jessica Mikulski, 703-907-8562

jmikulski@psych.org

For Immediate Release:

September 22, 2005

Release No. 05-56

APA-NAMI Symposium Educates Congress on PTSD following Iraq, Katrina

Arlington, Va. – Today the American Psychiatric Association (APA) and the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) helped raise the awareness of Congressional members on mental illnesses by highlighting a common problem suffered by survivors of Hurricane Katrina and the war in Iraq: posttraumatic stress disorder, also known as PTSD.

Each year the APA and NAMI host a Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW) luncheon symposium for members of Congress in advance of MIAW. This year's symposium, held in the U.S. Capitol, was themed "Road to Victory over PTSD: New Research Helps All Americans."

APA President, Steven S. Sharfstein, M.D., opened the symposium with remarks emphasizing the importance of PTSD research and its application to both returning service personnel and victims of Hurricane Katrina.

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) Director Thomas R. Insel, M.D., with leading PTSD researchers, treatment providers and mental health advocates provided members and congressional staff with the latest information on patient populations and treatment breakthroughs.

David E. Post, M.D., medical director of Baton Rouge, La.-based Capital Area Human Services and Harold M. Ginzburg, M.D., disaster response director for the Louisiana Psychiatric Medical Association (LPMA) – traveled from Katrina-ravaged Louisiana to give lawmakers an on-the-ground perspective. They reported on relief efforts and survivors' mental health in the immediate wake of the storm, as well as offered a longer-term prognosis.

Roger K. Pitman, M.D., of Harvard Medical School, discussed his work with memory in PTSD research. U.S. Army Col. Elspeth Cameron Ritchie, M.D., also addressed the condition and needs of soldiers returning from combat in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Other speakers included James H. Scully Jr., M.D., CEO and medical director of the American Psychiatric Association and Michael Fitzpatrick, executive director of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI).

This year MIAW is observed Oct. 2-8 by the APA, NAMI and other patient advocacy organizations and mental health providers. The theme is "Leveling the Playing Field."

About the American Psychiatric Association:

The American Psychiatric Association is a national medical specialty society whose more than 37,000 physician members specialize in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Public outreach during MIAW is a component of APA's "Healthy Minds. Healthy Lives." public information campaign to raise awareness on mental health issues. Visit APA at www.psych.org and www.healthyminds.org.