
**Does Combat Trauma Cause a Majority
of PTSD Symptoms in Combat Veterans?**

To the Editor: Gilbertson et al concluded that “the majority of psychiatric symptoms reported by combat veterans with PTSD [posttraumatic stress disorder] would not have been present were it not for their exposure to traumatic events.”^{1(p1324)} This conclusion was based on a comparison between combat-exposed Vietnam veterans and identical male twins who were not exposed to combat trauma. I question whether the results truly support the

conclusion that the *majority* of symptoms would not have been present, as an important factor contributing to reported psychopathology in veterans is compensation status.²⁻⁴ The authors seemed to have dismissed this possibility by noting that “[W]e cannot rule out the possibility that increased SCL-90-R scores to some degree represent compensation-seeking or general symptom overreporting in the PTSD group. The literature on this, however, has been inconclusive.”^{1(p1328)}

Would it not have been possible, and desirable, to have included compensation status among the variables included in the analysis, perhaps to further clarify the relationship between compensation status and psychopathology? Had this been done, the conclusion that the majority of symptoms would not have been present absent exposure to traumatic events would have been better supported. Perhaps the authors have since performed such an analysis and can shed light on this.

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