

Preface

Musculoskeletal injuries and conditions are endemic in US military populations. Former US Army Surgeon General, James Peake, referred to the burden of musculoskeletal injuries in the military as a “hidden epidemic” in 2000 [4]. Today, as the US military is transitioning from more than a decade of war on two fronts in the Middle East, new data suggest that this epidemic is emerging from the shadows [1–3]. Significant combat wounds, as well as non-battle injuries during deployment, have contributed to long-term disability and decreased quality of life in our veterans. This is, in addition, to the already high rates of training and sports-related injuries commonly observed in the young and active military population.

In this text, we have assembled a comprehensive panel of military and civilian clinicians and researchers with the primary objective of shedding some additional light on this “hidden” epidemic. Our goal was to produce an authoritative text on the epidemiology of musculoskeletal injuries and conditions typically seen in service members, utilizing the best data available to date. Clearly, some areas are still lacking in quality studies and supporting data—and we have solicited expert opinion in these cases. We have provided some general chapters on combat, noncombat, and sports and physical training-related injuries, as well as an anatomic breakdown of injury patterns commonly observed in military populations. In the final section, we have provided an overview of how the public health model has been applied to study and address the injury epidemic in the military and we have provided a framework for developing and implementing effective injury prevention strategies within this unique high-risk population. Our ultimate hope is to generate dialogue, research, and effective interventions that can be implemented in real-world settings to help mitigate the impact of musculoskeletal injuries and conditions among those who have committed to selflessly serve our nation.

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