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Returning soldiers reintegrate with help of 'docudrama'

Penn Med to stage 'ReEntry,' a play focused on returning veterans

By [MICHELLE MA](#) · February 20, 2013, 11:43 pm



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"ReEntry" will run March 8-9 at the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts and is co-presented with Penn Medicine.

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For many of the nation's soldiers, coming home from war can be almost as challenging as leaving for deployment.

Penn Medicine hopes to highlight some of the medical and psychological issues these veterans face through "ReEntry," a play that will be presented in collaboration with the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts on March 8 and 9.

The "theatrical docudrama," which was created from compilations of interviews with real-life Marines and their families after they come home from deployment, is a part of Penn Medicine's Combat to Care campaign.

"The arts, and theater in particular, is a great venue for educating people," said Judy Schueler, the vice president of Organizational Development and chief Human Resources officer at the University of Pennsylvania Health System. "We expect that we will do more of this, and I think it's an interesting way to bring people together around this particular topic."

According to Schueler, Combat to Care is a three-part campaign on the part of Penn Med that works to heighten awareness of veteran's issues. It is also a part of a larger national movement called Joining Forces, spearheaded by Michelle Obama and Jill Biden.

Combat to Care has three main goals. First, it works to recruit veterans for Penn Med. In addition, the program recognizes those that already work for the hospital and educates clinicians on identifying and treating post-traumatic stress disorder and anxiety disorder.

Commissioned in 2009, "ReEntry" has toured at over 30 military bases and has been used as post-deployment training for service members by the Department of Defense, according to a press release for the play.

According to the play's co-writer and director, KJ Sanchez, who has five brothers who have served in the military, it all started with one question posed to servicemen who came back from deployment: "What is it like to go from combat, to standing in line at the grocery store, to a family barbecue, to coming home and reintegrating into your life and family and community and country?" Sanchez asked.

"I think what the play really does is help us understand how the military sees us," Sanchez said. "All the hyper-vigilance that serves you very well when you're in combat is hard to let go of when you're back home, simple things like 'Don't put your back to the door, don't stand next to a window.'"

"It's a docudrama peppered with quite a bit of humor as well," she added.

The performance will be followed by a panel discussion hosted by representatives of Penn Med and the School of Nursing, which will focus on the treatment of PTSD and anxiety.

According to psychology professor Carmen McLean, who researches PTSD and will be on the panel, "We'll discuss the treatments that are available for PTSD as well as the specific culture of the military and how that culture affects the treatment."

McLean hopes that this play and the venue will allow some people to get over "the stigma that discourages people [with PTSD] from seeking help."

"People are starting to become aware of the problems of PTSD, but there's not that much info available to them about effective treatment options," she said.

"Hopefully people will leave with some sense of what the resources are," she added.

Performances will take place on Friday, March 8 at 8 p.m. and Saturday, March 9 at 2 p.m. at the Annenberg Center.

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