

AWARD NUMBER: W81XWH-18-1-0691

TITLE: Determining the Role of Tau and Amyloid in Chronic Symptoms and Deficits in Military Personnel Following TBIs Through PET Imaging

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CONTRACTING ORGANIZATION: The Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine, Inc.

REPORT DATE: Oct 2021

TYPE OF REPORT: Annual

PREPARED FOR: U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command
Fort Detrick, Maryland 21702-5012

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT: Approved for Public Release; Distribution Unlimited

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

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1. REPORT DATE Oct 2021		2. REPORT TYPE Annual		3. DATES COVERED 15 Sep 2020 – 14 Sep 2021	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Determining the Role of Tau and Amyloid in Chronic Symptoms and Deficits in Military Personnel Following TBIs Through PET Imaging				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER W81XWH-18-1-0691	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Dr. Jessica Gill & Dr. Rael Lange E-Mail: gillj@mail.nih.gov ; rlange@dvbic.org				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) The Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine, Inc. 6720-a Rockledge Dr. Ste 100 Bethesda, MD 20817-1891				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command Fort Detrick, Maryland 21702-5012				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT (appr 200 words) Traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) are common in military personnel and are linked to high rates of chronic behavioral and neurological symptoms and deficits. However, the mechanisms underlying these symptoms and deficits remain elusive. Current research suggests a link between TBIs and Alzheimer's disease (AD) and AD-like dementia (ADRD). It may be that in some individuals, a TBI initiates a neurodegenerative process, that shares pathological features with AD and ADRD, including the presence of tau tangles and amyloid-beta (A β) plaques in the brain. Positron emission tomography (PET) studies report that tau neurofibrillary tangles (NFT) are present in athletes with multiple concussions, and that even a single TBI increases the risk for A β plaques. Yet, these tau and A β PET findings are not present in all TBI patients, and their role in chronic symptoms following a TBI remains largely unknown. In this study, we will use PET with ligands specific to amyloid and tau to determine if a TBI results in tau NFTs and A β plaques, 10-years following a TBI, in a young military cohort. We will then examine these PET changes have clinical implications 10-years post TBI. Finally, we will evaluate changes in blood-based biomarkers implicated in AD to determine if these peripheral markers are related to neuronal changes. Results of these investigations will determine if there is an increased risk for AD-like pathology following a TBI in military personnel, and if PET findings have clinical implications to military personnel/veterans.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS traumatic brain injury; chronic traumatic encephalopathy; Alzheimer's disease; Alzheimer's disease-related dementias; neurodegenerative disorders; beta-amyloid, tau; tauopathy, diagnostic imaging; PET, positron emission tomography					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE			USAMRMC
Unclassified	Unclassified	Unclassified	Unclassified	15	19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)

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1. INTRODUCTION: *Narrative that briefly (one paragraph) describes the subject, purpose and scope of the research.*

Traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) are common in military personnel and are linked to high rates of chronic behavioral and neurological symptoms and deficits, especially in those with multiple injuries and or more severe injuries. However, the mechanisms underlying these symptoms and deficits remain elusive. Current research suggests a link between TBIs and Alzheimer’s disease (AD) and AD-like dementia (ADRD), but this relationship remains tentative. It may be that in some individuals, a TBI initiates a neurodegenerative process, that shares pathological features with AD and ADRD, including the presence of tau tangles and amyloid-beta (A β) plaques in the brain. Positron emission tomography (PET) studies report that tau neurofibrillary tangles (NFT) are present in athletes with multiple concussions, and that even a single TBI increases the risk for A β plaques. Yet, these tau and A β PET findings are not present in all TBI patients, and their role in chronic symptoms following a TBI remains largely unknown.

Determining the presence of A β plaques and tau NFTs in younger cohorts of military personnel and veterans and their relation to chronic behavioral and neurological symptoms is important. A β plaques are linked to neuropsychological deficits and have been shown to predict conversion from mild cognitive impairment (MCI) to AD/ADRD in older civilian samples, but their contribution to symptoms and deficits in is younger individuals with TBIs remains unknown. Previously, we reported greater tau NFTs were present in athletes with multiple concussions and behavioral and neurological symptoms. Our group has also shown that military personnel with TBIs have (a) higher total tau in peripheral blood, (b) an altered A β 40/42 ratio, and (c) high levels of inflammation that persist for years following the injury, and that these biomarkers are related to chronic symptoms, including post-traumatic stress disorder and post- concussion symptoms as well as impaired neurocognitive performance within the first 12 months following a mild-moderate TBI, suggesting that these biomarkers relate to recovery from TBI. These findings have implications to understanding chronic symptoms in military personnel, as conversion from MCI to AD/ADRD has been linked to elevations of these proteins. In this study, we will use PET with ligands specific to amyloid and tau to determine if a TBI results in tau NFTs and A β plaques, 10-years following a TBI, in a young military cohort. We will then examine these PET changes have clinical implications 10-years post TBI. Finally, we will evaluate changes in blood-based biomarkers implicated in AD to determine if these peripheral markers are related to neuronal changes. Results of these investigations will determine if there is an increased risk for AD-like pathology following a TBI in military personnel, and if PET findings have clinical implications to military personnel/veterans.

2. KEYWORDS: *Provide a brief list of keywords (limit to 20 words).*

traumatic brain injury; chronic traumatic encephalopathy; Alzheimer’s disease; Alzheimer’s disease-related dementias; neurodegenerative disorders; beta-amyloid; tau; tauopathy; PET, positron emission tomography

3. **ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** *The PI is reminded that the recipient organization is required to obtain prior written approval from the awarding agency grants official whenever there are significant changes in the project or its direction.*

What were the major goals of the project?

List the major goals of the project as stated in the approved SOW. If the application listed milestones/target dates for important activities or phases of the project, identify these dates and show actual completion dates or the percentage of completion.

Major Task 1: Institutional Review Board (IRB)
Approvals Major Task 2: Data Collection in PET Studies
Major Task 3: Linking of clinical, neuropsychological functioning data, and neuroimaging data
Major Task 4: Analyses of already collected clinical and neuroimaging data with PET imaging data

What was accomplished under these goals?

For this reporting period describe: 1) major activities; 2) specific objectives; 3) significant results or key outcomes, including major findings, developments, or conclusions (both positive and negative); and/or 4) other achievements. Include a discussion of stated goals not met. Description shall include pertinent data and graphs in sufficient detail to explain any significant results achieved. A succinct description of the methodology used shall be provided. As the project progresses to completion, the emphasis in reporting in this section should shift from reporting activities to reporting accomplishments.

Major Task 1: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approvals

- 1) *major activities:*
- a) Amendment of the Walter Reed protocol to include the tau-ligand PET scan
 - **IRB approval of the amendment was received on 3/29/2021.**
 - b) Review and execution of CRADA between HJF, WRNMMC and Life Molecular Imaging (LMI)
 - **CRADA was returned from LMI on 8/2021. Recommendations made to CRADA by LMI were accepted by HJF. CRADA is now being reviewed by WRNMMC.**
 - c) Coordination with LMI regarding logistics and costs associated with LMI undertaking monitoring responsibilities
 - d) Recruitment/hiring of key support positions needed to facilitate study coordination
 - **Hiring of needed personnel (Clinical Research Coordinators) was completed on 09/2021**
- 2) *specific objectives:*
- a) Completion of legal/regulatory review needed to execute CRADA between HJF/WRNMMC and LMI
 - **Resolution of questions submitted to LMI by WRNMMC upon review of most recent version of CRADA provided by LMI on 8/21.**
 - b) IRB approval of Walter Reed protocol amendment (undertaken to include the tau PET scan – this is in lieu of having a separate NIH protocol for the tau PET scan only)
- 3) *significant results or key outcomes, including major findings, developments, or conclusions (both positive and negative):*
- a) None

What opportunities for training and professional development has the project provided?

If the project was not intended to provide training and professional development opportunities or there is nothing significant to report during this reporting period, state "Nothing to Report."

Describe opportunities for training and professional development provided to anyone who worked on the project or anyone who was involved in the activities supported by the project. "Training" activities are those in which individuals with advanced professional skills and experience assist others in attaining greater proficiency. Training activities may include, for example, courses or one-on-one work with a mentor. "Professional development" activities result in increased knowledge or skill in one's area of expertise and may include workshops, conferences, seminars, study groups, and individual study. Include participation in conferences, workshops, and seminars not listed under major activities.

Nothing to Report.

How were the results disseminated to communities of interest?

If there is nothing significant to report during this reporting period, state "Nothing to Report."

Describe how the results were disseminated to communities of interest. Include any outreach activities that were undertaken to reach members of communities who are not usually aware of these project activities, for the purpose of enhancing public understanding and increasing interest in learning and careers in science, technology, and the humanities.

Nothing to Report.

What do you plan to do during the next reporting period to accomplish the goals?

If this is the final report, state "Nothing to Report."

Describe briefly what you plan to do during the next reporting period to accomplish the goals and objectives.

We expect to have all outstanding regulatory documents completed within the initial weeks of the next reporting period and anticipate being ready to begin enrolling participants by October/November 2021. This will include the finalization/execution of the HJF/LMI/WRNMMC CRADA as well as all other regulatory activities required for the Walter Reed study to begin enrolling participants and collecting data. Furthermore, we have initiated meetings with the clinical team so that changes can be made to initiate consenting of subjects when they are observed at their year 8 or year 10 subject visit.

4. **IMPACT:** Describe distinctive contributions, major accomplishments, innovations, successes, or any change in practice or behavior that has come about as a result of the project relative to:

What was the impact on the development of the principal discipline(s) of the project?
If there is nothing significant to report during this reporting period, state "Nothing to Report."

Describe how findings, results, techniques that were developed or extended, or other products from the project made an impact or are likely to make an impact on the base of knowledge, theory, and research in the principal disciplinary field(s) of the project. Summarize using language that an intelligent lay audience can understand (Scientific American style).

Nothing to report.

What was the impact on other disciplines?
If there is nothing significant to report during this reporting period, state "Nothing to Report."

Describe how the findings, results, or techniques that were developed or improved, or other products from the project made an impact or are likely to make an impact on other disciplines.

Nothing to report.

What was the impact on technology transfer?
If there is nothing significant to report during this reporting period, state "Nothing to Report."

Describe ways in which the project made an impact, or is likely to make an impact, on commercial technology or public use, including:

- *transfer of results to entities in government or industry;*
- *instances where the research has led to the initiation of a start-up company; or*
- *adoption of new practices.*

Nothing to Report.

What was the impact on society beyond science and technology?

If there is nothing significant to report during this reporting period, state "Nothing to Report."

Describe how results from the project made an impact, or are likely to make an impact, beyond the bounds of science, engineering, and the academic world on areas such as:

- improving public knowledge, attitudes, skills, and abilities;*
- changing behavior, practices, decision making, policies (including regulatory policies), or social actions; or*
- improving social, economic, civic, or environmental conditions.*

Nothing to Report.

- 5. CHANGES/PROBLEMS:** *The PD/PI is reminded that the recipient organization is required to obtain prior written approval from the awarding agency grants official whenever there are significant changes in the project or its direction. If not previously reported in writing, provide the following additional information or state, "Nothing to Report," if applicable:*

Changes in approach and reasons for change

Describe any changes in approach during the reporting period and reasons for these changes. Remember that significant changes in objectives and scope require prior approval of the agency.

The two significant challenges we faced this reporting period pertain to (1) travel restrictions related to COVID which impacts recruitment and (2) finalization/execution of the HJF/LMI/WRNMMC CRADA.

- For recruitment, the parent Walter Reed study has resumed since our last reporting period, as the restriction for Walter Reed is now lifted. There have been issues related to across state traveling related to COVID, and most of the subjects are not local, so this limit is about to be lifted.
- The other prior issue that has held us back the most is the CRADA. The CRADA has now made its way through Walter Reed, and we are waiting on one last signature from the company that is supplying the ligand. The preliminary look at the CRADA by the company was very good, and there were no concerns, as it is the template of another project that is quite similar. An updated draft of the CRADA was received from LMI on 08/21. This draft included a couple of recommendations to the CRADA which were subsequently reviewed and approved by HJF. The CRADA is now being reviewed by WRNMMC. Based on recent updates received from WRNMMC, we expect to have the CRADA fully executed within the next 2-3 weeks.

Actual or anticipated problems or delays and actions or plans to resolve them

Describe problems or delays encountered during the reporting period and actions or plans to resolve them.

We do not anticipate any additional issues.

Changes that had a significant impact on expenditures

Describe changes during the reporting period that may have had a significant impact on expenditures, for example, delays in hiring staff or favorable developments that enable meeting objectives at less cost than anticipated.

Nothing to Report.

Significant changes in use or care of human subjects, vertebrate animals, biohazards, and/or select agents

Describe significant deviations, unexpected outcomes, or changes in approved protocols for the use or care of human subjects, vertebrate animals, biohazards, and/or select agents during the reporting period. If required, were these changes approved by the applicable institution committee (or equivalent) and reported to the agency? Also specify the applicable Institutional Review Board/Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee approval dates.

Significant changes in use or care of human subjects

Nothing to Report.

Significant changes in use or care of vertebrate animals

Nothing to Report.

Significant changes in use of biohazards and/or select agents

Nothing to Report.

6. **PRODUCTS:** List any products resulting from the project during the reporting period. If there is nothing to report under a particular item, state "Nothing to Report."

- **Publications, conference papers, and presentations**

Report only the major publication(s) resulting from the work under this award.

Journal publications. List peer-reviewed articles or papers appearing in scientific, technical, or professional journals. Identify for each publication: Author(s); title; journal; volume; year; page numbers; status of publication (published; accepted, awaiting publication; submitted, under review; other); acknowledgement of federal support (yes/no).

Nothing to Report.

Books or other non-periodical, one-time publications. Report any book, monograph, dissertation, abstract, or the like published as or in a separate publication, rather than a periodical or series. Include any significant publication in the proceedings of a one-time conference or in the report of a one-time study, commission, or the like. Identify for each one-time publication: author(s); title; editor; title of collection, if applicable; bibliographic information; year; type of publication (e.g., book, thesis or dissertation); status of publication (published; accepted, awaiting publication; submitted, under review; other); acknowledgement of federal support (yes/no).

Nothing to Report.

Other publications, conference papers and presentations. Identify any other publications, conference papers and/or presentations not reported above. Specify the status of the publication as noted above. List presentations made during the last year (international, national, local societies, military meetings, etc.). Use an asterisk (*) if presentation produced a manuscript.

Nothing to Report.

- **Website(s) or other Internet site(s)**

List the URL for any Internet site(s) that disseminates the results of the research activities. A short description of each site should be provided. It is not necessary to include the publications already specified above in this section.

Nothing to Report.

- **Technologies or techniques**

Identify technologies or techniques that resulted from the research activities. Describe the technologies or techniques were shared.

Nothing to Report.

- **Inventions, patent applications, and/or licenses**

Identify inventions, patent applications with date, and/or licenses that have resulted from the research. Submission of this information as part of an interim research performance progress report is not a substitute for any other invention reporting required under the terms and conditions of an award.

Nothing to Report.

- **Other Products**

Identify any other reportable outcomes that were developed under this project. Reportable outcomes are defined as a research result that is or relates to a product, scientific advance, or research tool that makes a meaningful contribution toward the understanding, prevention, diagnosis, prognosis, treatment and /or rehabilitation of a disease, injury or condition, or to improve the quality of life. Examples include:

- *data or databases;*
- *physical collections;*
- *audio or video products;*
- *software;*
- *models;*
- *educational aids or curricula;*
- *instruments or equipment;*
- *research material (e.g., Germplasm; cell lines, DNA probes, animal models);*
- *clinical interventions;*
- *new business creation; and*
- *other.*

Nothing to Report.

7. PARTICIPANTS & OTHER COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS

What individuals have worked on the project?

Provide the following information for: (1) PDs/PIs; and (2) each person who has worked at least one person month per year on the project during the reporting period, regardless of the source of compensation (a person month equals approximately 160 hours of effort). If information is unchanged from a previous submission, provide the name only and indicate “no change”.

Example:

Name: Mary Smith
Project Role: Graduate Student
Researcher Identifier (e.g. ORCID ID): 1234567
Contribution to Project: Ms. Smith has performed work in the area of combined error-control and constrained coding.
Funding Support: The Ford Foundation (Complete only if the funding support is provided from other than this award.)

Commented [DC(11)]: Samanda/Jehue, may you please assist with the nearest person month worked entry based on previous report

Name: Jessica Gill
Project Role: PI
Nearest person month worked: 2
Contribution to Project: Dr. Gill has worked to coordinate efforts for both the NIH protocol development and the Walter Reed Amendment. She has also worked to resolve the IND issues as well as consult between AVID and Life Molecular to arrange the ligands for use in this project. Coordination with Dr. Stone (UVA) to facilitate resources to advance protocol development and guide IND preparation are ongoing.

Name: Rael Lange
Project Role: PI
Nearest person month worked: 2
Contribution to Project: Dr. Lange has been overseeing the protocol amendments and negotiations of data and workflow for Walter Reed. He has been working to resolve the IND issues as well.

Name: Cassandra Pattinson
Project Role: Postdoctoral Fellow
Nearest person month worked: 3
Contribution to Project: Dr. Pattinson worked to coordinate efforts for protocols at NIH and Walter Reed to be developed and submitted.

Name: Christina Devoto
Project Role: Research Coordinator
Nearest person month worked: 12
Contribution to Project: Ms. Devoto worked on the development of the NIH protocol for the tau ligand and needed IND submission.

Has there been a change in the active other support of the PD/PI(s) or senior/key personnel since the last reporting period?

If there is nothing significant to report during this reporting period, state "Nothing to Report."

If the active support has changed for the PD/PI(s) or senior/key personnel, then describe what the change has been. Changes may occur, for example, if a previously active grant has closed and/or if a previously pending grant is now active. Annotate this information so it is clear what has changed from the previous submission. Submission of other support information is not necessary for pending changes or for changes in the level of effort for active support reported previously. The awarding agency may require prior written approval if a change in active other support significantly impacts the effort on the project that is the subject of the project report.

Nothing to Report.

What other organizations were involved as partners?

If there is nothing significant to report during this reporting period, state "Nothing to Report."

Describe partner organizations – academic institutions, other nonprofits, industrial or commercial firms, state or local governments, schools or school systems, or other organizations (foreign or domestic) – that were involved with the project. Partner organizations may have provided financial or in-kind support, supplied facilities or equipment, collaborated in the research, exchanged personnel, or otherwise contributed.

Provide the following information for each partnership:

Organization Name:

Location of Organization: (if foreign location list country)

Partner's contribution to the project (identify one or more)

- *Financial support;*
- *In-kind support (e.g., partner makes software, computers, equipment, etc., available to project staff);*
- *Facilities (e.g., project staff use the partner's facilities for project activities);*
- *Collaboration (e.g., partner's staff work with project staff on the project);*
- *Personnel exchanges (e.g., project staff and/or partner's staff use each other's facilities, work at each other's site); and*
- *Other.*

Nothing to Report.

8. SPECIAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

COLLABORATIVE AWARDS: *For collaborative awards, independent reports are required from BOTH the Initiating Principal Investigator (PI) and the Collaborating/Partnering PI. A duplicative report is acceptable; however, tasks shall be clearly marked with the responsible PI and research site. A report shall be submitted to <https://ers.amedd.army.mil> for each unique award.*

QUAD CHARTS: *If applicable, the Quad Chart (available on <https://www.usamraa.army.mil>) should be updated and submitted with attachments.*

9. **APPENDICES:** *Attach all appendices that contain information that supplements, clarifies or supports the text. Examples include original copies of journal articles, reprints of manuscripts and abstracts, a curriculum vitae, patent applications, study questionnaires, and surveys, etc.*