

# Traumatic Brain Injury Center of Excellence

## Podcast Transcript

### We Are in This Together: How Burnout Impacts Providers and Patients Alike

EPISODE DETAILS		
<b>PODCAST:</b>	Picking Your Brain	<b>Interviews:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dr. Nancy Skopp (PHCoE)</li><li>• CAPT Tricia Booker (TBICoE)</li></ul>
<b>FEATURES:</b>	<b>Host:</b> Kate Perelman	
<b>RUN TIME:</b>	6:31	

**Narrator:** The views opinions and findings contained in this podcast are those of the host and subject matter experts. They should not be construed as official Department of Defense positions, policies, or decisions unless designated by other official documentation.

**Narrator:** Welcome to the Picking Your Brain podcast. A series from the Traumatic Brain Injury Center of excellence, or TBICoE that focuses on the care and recovery of service members and veterans who have sustained a TBI. The Military Health System, or MHS recognizes May as Mental Health Awareness month. This year's theme is "In This Together," which focuses on the identification prevention and recovery from burnout in our military medical providers and service member populations. In this episode, we talk to mental health experts about the symptom crossovers between mild TBI and burnout and how these symptoms can disguise the underlying problem.

**Dr. Skopp:** My name is Nancy Scopp and I am a clinical psychologist.

**Narrator:** Dr. Scopp leads the Health Sciences and Population Research program at the Psychological Health Center of Excellence, or PHCoE. She says we should look at burnout as...

**Dr. Skopp:** A state of chronic physical, emotional, mental exhaustion, and it's accompanied by interpersonal stress in the workplace. And so that creates a very difficult situation that leads to the sufferer having. That's about their competence and their contributions in the workplace, and it can become a vicious cycle.

**Narrator:** Experts like Dr. Scopp and mental health providers across the Defense Department say that the signs and risks of burnout include anxiety, irritability, disengagement, low mood and . Exhaustion. Service members diagnosed with TBI may also suffer from similar symptoms resulting from their injury. TBICoE's Captain Tricia Booker, a licensed clinical social worker with the United States Public Health Service, explains how the mental health impacts of both burnout and TBI may make it difficult for medical providers to assess and manage their patients.

**CAPT. Booker:** You know, a TBI can affect service numbers. In many ways, it can affect their concentration. It can cause physical problems it can cause chronic headaches. And all those issues can kind of compound itself and look like depression. Basically people that are burned out, they might be cynical. They might be hyper-critical irritable all the time. They're not very productive. It might be skipping work or being late to work. They might have a short fuse and just have a lack of empathy or empathy for anybody else. And so those things can look like, you know, maybe they have anxiety or depression were it could actually be burnout.

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**Narrator:** When TBI or burnout symptoms mask themselves as depression, medical providers may struggle to find an accurate diagnosis and bring their patients relief. This can be stressful and demoralizing, and may lead to burnout in the providers themselves. In fact MHS and the Defense Health Agency, or DHA, are seeing burnout across all medical disciplines due to occupational stress. Dr. Scopp, again.

**Dr. Skopp:** DHA views provider burnout as a critical threat to optimizing healthcare and service members. And so therefore places a very high priority on protecting staff from burnout and recognizing in providers who are actually most susceptible to burnout. I think there's particular concern about burnout, compassion fatigue, which is really closely related concept really basically the cost of caring. And so they're two very important issues because the health and well-being of the workforce is critical.

**Narrator:** According to Dr. Scopp, Captain Booker, and other medical health experts, strategies for treating mild TBI and burnout are remarkably similar. Patients are encouraged to seek professional help focus on physical wellness, maintain social relationships and get sleep.

**Dr. Skopp:** Getting enough sleep. That is huge. I would say that's almost a silver bullet. I'm improving sleep is one of the big things you can do to have more energy. And it's a tough thing because sleep problems are quite pervasive.

**Narrator:** Captain Booker agrees.

**CAPT. Booker:** Not having good sleep affects every area of your life because you're always tired. You're depressed, you're anxious, you're irritable. Those things always come up when you're not sleeping well.

**Narrator:** Getting enough sleep. Keeping your body healthy. Seeking professional help. These care strategies are effective for both burnout and mild TBI. But they are only helpful if providers can accurately diagnose you. To do that, you need to recognize the symptoms described by Dr. Scopp and Captain Booker in yourself. Service members and medical providers are highly motivated individuals. They put their mission before everything else. However, whether your mission is defending the United States or healing your patients, you can only succeed when you're healthy in both body and mind. Captain Booker, again.

**CAPT. Booker:** You know yourself better than anyone. You know, no one lives inside your head or your body. Everybody, like I mentioned before is going to have stress in their lives. You're going to have disappointments. You're going to have things not go well. It's to the point when you can't cope with it anymore is when you really need to get help. You know, you tried everything you can, and you're kind of at your wit's end, then you need to come see professional help. You know, we're here to help you and support you and get you back on track.

**Narrator:** For more information on TBI and mental health visit [health.mil/TBICoE](http://health.mil/TBICoE). You can find more on burnout at [health.mil/PHCoE](http://health.mil/PHCoE). Thank you for listening to this episode of the Picking Your Brain podcast. It's produced and edited by Vinnie White and hosted by me, Kate Perelman.