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S.C. researchers get \$1.5M federal contract from DoD to study brain injury

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S.C. researchers will join a national team of experts in an attempt to find a treatment for the post-traumatic stress disorders and traumatic brain injuries common in soldiers and Marines returning from war.

The S.C. Research Authority, Medical University of South Carolina and University of South Carolina, in conjunction with other state partners, have been jointly selected by the U.S. Department of Defense as one of 10 national clinical consortium study sites, SCRA announced Wednesday.

SCRA's announcement about the program came two days after an American shot and killed five fellow soldiers at a counseling center in Baghdad. That event has drawn even more attention to mental disorders that could result from war-related stress, as the battle in Iraq hits six years and the fighting in Afghanistan stretches into an eighth year.

"Traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder are two signature injuries from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan,"

said Dr. Mark George, the lead researcher on brain injuries at MUSC. "Congress decided the area has been neglected too long."

George is working on a separate venture with Force Protection, the Ladson maker of war-vehicles, to help research components, such as seats and helmets, to help minimize the physical damage to the brain that can be caused by a massive jolt to the body, such as an explosive detonating underneath a vehicle.

The initial contract for the federal program was for about \$1.5 million, for the establishment of the state program and for salaries. Further research dollars are expected later, said Rob Davis, SCRA's program manager for the study and the executive director of the organization's Nutrition Research Consortium.

In total, Davis said the Department of Defense is expected to spend \$600 million on the program, with about half earmarked for research and the other half for treatment programs.

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