



September 30, 2009
Contact: Perrin Damon, 503-945-5738

War vet stands up for pain management

Author gives away book on pain management for returning veterans

Derek McGinnis' journey from Navy corpsman to Iraq War veteran was filled with pain. Wounded in November 2004 during the intense fighting in Fallujah, Iraq, he suffered an amputation above the knee, traumatic brain injury, eye damage and multiple shrapnel wounds.

His life hung in the balance for days, but McGinnis survived. His new reality is life punctuated by chronic pain. And so goes the story for many people, but the number is growing among those who have served in the military.

McGinnis uses his story to advocate for pain management, a multi-disciplinary field of medicine that is becoming increasingly acknowledged as a specialty. In conjunction with Gov. Ted Kulongoski's order proclaiming September as Pain Awareness Month in Oregon, McGinnis brought his story to Oregon in person and in print.

McGinnis, who shares his experiences with audiences nationwide, spoke about pain management from the point of view of a combat-wounded veteran at a free public event Wednesday, September 30, in Salem. "My mission now is to elevate the discussion," he said.

Also addressing the guests were Dr. Bruce Goldberg, director of the Department of Human Services, and Jim Willis, director of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Additionally, McGinnis took his advocacy for pain management one step further and wrote a book, "Exit Wounds: A Survival Guide to Pain Management for Returning Veterans and their Families." Part inspirational, part instructional, the book documents his journey and provides practical advice to help others navigate the military and veterans' affairs health care system.

(more)

“ ‘Exit Wounds’ is about raising awareness of battlefield injuries and their impact on families, coping with pain, and obtaining the tools to carry on,” said McGinnis. “On the battlefield, the ‘pain is not an option’ attitude is an essential survival skill. Back home, not only is it normal to admit you are in pain, it is healthy to do so. Pain is not a sign of weakness.”

McGinnis currently serves as the Military/Veterans Initiative amputee outreach advocate for the American Pain Foundation. Through the generosity of the American Pain Foundation, **McGinnis’ book was provided free to Oregon veterans at the event. It will continue to be available through veterans’ offices statewide while supplies last.** Written in collaboration with nationally renowned pain experts, the book was released September 22.

Oregon is the only state in the union that has convened a Pain Management Commission and has a Pain Management Program to help all citizens – military and civilian – with pain issues. Oregon's Pain Management program disseminates information that helps patients and health care providers address chronic pain.

More information about Oregon’s Pain Management program, which is available to all Oregonians, may be found on the Web at <http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/pain> or by calling 503-945-7009. Veterans may request a copy of the book by calling the same number or e-mailing jennifer.m.wagner@state.or.us.

More Info:

DHS Office of Communication: 503-945-5738

DHS pain coordinator: 503-945-7009

ODVA public information: 503-373-2386, 2389, 2390

#