

The Docs—A Graphic Novel

RTI International worked with the Naval Health Research Center (NHRC) to collaboratively write and design *The Docs*. This 200-page graphic novel was designed to psychologically prepare Navy Corpsmen for their first and subsequent deployments to Afghanistan and to help inactive Servicemen who may still be wrestling with post-combat issues. *The Docs* realistically portrays common concerns faced by our military personnel in war zones and serves as a discussion tool for lessening the stigma associated with combat/operational stress (COSC).

Support Expertise

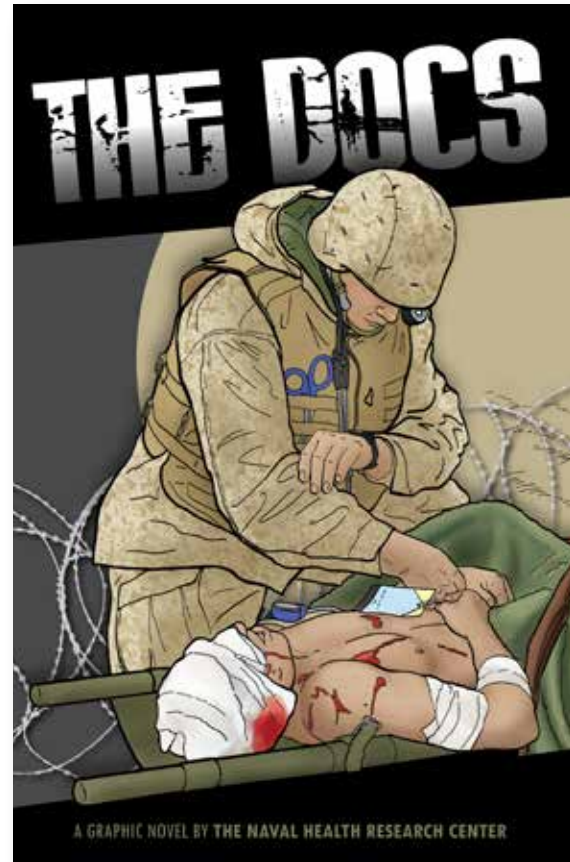
- Combat/operational stress-related educational materials
- Technical script writing
- Graphic novel illustration and design
- Animated video production

Background

In 2007, RTI began a collaborative effort with NHRC to generate programs and recommendations for the prevention, evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment of COSC injuries in Service personnel, their families, and the public. One objective of this collaboration was to provide a range of COSC-related educational materials and other stress-mitigation strategies to support deploying personnel, their families, and health care providers. To this end, NHRC and RTI decided to use a graphic novel as the medium because its format and genre are appealing to the target audience—largely 18- to 24-year-olds who might be otherwise disinterested in combat stress information delivered through conventional educational materials or training programs.

The Story

The Docs follows four fictional Navy Corpsmen as they prepare for deployment to Iraq, arrive in country, carry out their duties, and ultimately return home. During their deployment, the characters encounter stressors commonly



found in a combat zone. Corpsmen Banks, Jackson, Mendez, and Wallace deal with insurgent attacks and roadside bombs, treat gravely wounded Marines, and wrestle with the emotional turmoil of leaving their families behind.

Approach

The RTI project team worked closely with NHRC staff to create story arcs for each of the four main characters, weaving these individual arcs into a comprehensive narrative of their experiences and dividing them into discreet scenes that represented separate teaching points. RTI staff members worked closely with subject matter

experts to develop realistic dialog and illustrations that interpreted combat stress scenarios. RTI extensively researched Navy and Marine Corps protocols and structure and planned dialog, art, and page design to enhance the story and make the novel appealing to the target audience. Finally, RTI coordinated full-color printing of the book with a commercial print vendor and developed an animated video production.

More Information

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For information about ordering, viewing, or downloading a copy of *The Docs*, visit www.rti.org/thedocs.

