

Press Release

Afghanistan veteran speaks out on need for mental health support



Thursday 28th October 2021

Honorary Colonel Andy Reid MBE, an Army Veteran who was seriously injured in Afghanistan and has since become a passionate campaigner for people with disabilities and mental health issues, is speaking at an Online Global Stress & Wellbeing Summit hosted by the International Stress Management Association (ISMAUK) on Wednesday 3rd November.

While on patrol in Helmand Province as an infantry-section commander with Burma Company, 3rd Battalion the Yorkshire Regiment in October 2009, Andy was blown up by a Taliban improvised device. As a result of the explosion, he lost his right leg below the knee, left leg above the knee, and right arm. It was thought he would not survive. But he defied the odds, astounding people with the speed of his recovery. Andy won The Sun's Millie Award for Overcoming Adversity in 2010 and was awarded the MBE in 2019 for voluntary service to veterans and to people with disabilities in St Helen's.

We need more effective referral for mental health issues

A passionate ambassador, speaker and fundraiser for mental health and related issues, Andy is a member of the *Frontliners Speak Out* panel at the ISMA^{UK} Summit, which will focus on the particular mental health and wellbeing challenges faced by those on the frontline. He believes that the more knowledge we have, the better the chances that victims will recover. Andy comments, "More and more sufferers are coming forward to talk about mental health, PTSD and other issues, but an effective referral system is needed. It can be quite confusing as there are a lot of organisations just signposting services. Having plucked up the courage to talk about your problems, to be consigned to a waiting list is not helpful".

He continues, "GPs are often the first point of contact, but they could do more, for example, finding out if you are a veteran and being better able to refer you on. And the traumatic effects veterans and others are suffering may not become apparent immediately – some talk straight away, but some may take 10 or 15 years to speak. Victims of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts may not feel they can talk about their experiences for 10 years".

Mental health is major focus at ISMA^{UK} Summit

The focus at ISMA^{UK}'s Stress and Wellbeing Summit will be very much on mental health, stress and wellbeing. In addition to the *Frontliners* panel there are sessions on *The Changing Face of Mental Health* and *Enhancing Mental Wellbeing*, as well as keynotes, expert sessions and live discussions on topics relating to stress, mental and physical health, workplace wellbeing and developing resilience. Amongst over 50 world-class speakers at the Summit

#stresssummit2021

are Professor Sir Cary Cooper CBE, a renowned expert on workplace wellbeing; Francoise Woolley, Head of Mental Health & Wellbeing at Acas; Professor Diana Kloss MBE, Hon President & Chair of the Council for Work and Health; and Professor Simon Wessely, a psychiatrist and epidemiologist who led the recent independent review into the Mental Health Act.

ISMA^{UK} is working to reduce the stigma attached to mental health and stress

Carole Spiers, Chair of ISMA^{UK}, said, “We are incredibly proud to have Colonel Andy Reid as one of our speakers at our Summit this year, which is the highlight of International Stress Awareness Week. We are working to raise awareness of the need to reduce the continuing stigma attached to mental health and stress issues in the UK and elsewhere and, as Andy says, to help those who need it to get the treatment they deserve”.

Notes for Editors

- ISMA^{UK}'s Online Global Stress & Wellbeing is being held from 3rd-4th November, with the theme *Putting Health, Happiness and Wellbeing into the Heart of Business*. It is the centrepiece of **#InternationalStressAwarenessWeek**, **#StressAwarenessWeek**, from 1st-5th November. International Stress Awareness Week was created in 2018 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of **#NationalStressAwarenessDay**. It is being widely promoted on social media using the hashtag **#StressSummit2021**.
- Corporal Andy Reid MBE, who is taking part in the *Frontliners Speak Out* panel at the Summit, is a passionate ambassador, speaker and fundraiser for the Soldiers' Charity, and founder of the Standing Tall Foundation, established to provide ground-level interventions across a wide portfolio of causes, by direct support or supporting the work of other organisations and charities. He is also an accomplished motivational speaker and the author of *Standing Tall: the inspirational story of a true British Hero*, published in 2013.
- The other speakers on the *Frontliners Speak Out* panel, moderated by Keith Fraser, Chair, Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, are; Susan Jain, Intensive Care & Anaesthetic Consultant, Homerton University Hospital Foundation Trust; Edmund Jacobs, Head of Health, Safety & Security, at London Ambulance Service NHS Trust; and Shabnam Chaudhri, formerly Detective Superintendent and Head of Safeguarding East Area, Metropolitan Police. This interactive panel invites questions from the public, and is being held on Wednesday 3rd November at 11.30 am.

- Entry to the Summit is by ticket only. For more information about International Stress Awareness Week visit <https://isma.org.uk/isma-international-stress-awareness-week> and for details of the Online Global Stress and Wellbeing Summit and how to buy tickets, visit <https://isma.org.uk/isma-online-global-stress-and-wellbeing-summit>. Ticket-holders can view all sessions until Friday 13th November.
- For a list of speakers, go to <https://isma.org.uk/event-speakers-2021> and for details of the week's programme, go to <https://isma.org.uk/full-summit-event-programme/2021>.
- For interviews, please contact Carole Spiers FISMA, FPSA, MIHPE, Chair, ISMA^{UK} on 07768 878910 or email her at chair@isma.org.uk.
- ISMA^{UK} is the leading professional body for workplace and personal stress management, wellbeing and performance. As a registered charity and membership-based organisation for over 30 years, ISMA^{UK} exists to promote sound knowledge and best practice in stress management, both nationally and internationally, providing advice to a wide range of individuals, businesses and voluntary organisations, while supporting the Health & Safety Executive in delivering their requirements for Stress Risk Assessment.