



# AN OPEN LETTER TO MY FELLOW VETERANS ABOUT KETAMINE FOR PTSD



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# KETAMINE FOR COMBAT PTSD

Klarisana was born in 2015 because there was a loose ball on the field. The number “22” had become a eerie part of our collective discourse as it came to represent the number of veterans every day who chose to take their own lives. This was a statistic that really made me mad and it was a target that I felt I had to engage. The genesis of Klarisana actually started about twenty years earlier when I was training to be a Medic at Camp Bullis. For those of you who aren’t familiar with this garden spot, it is an installation in San Antonio, Texas where Army Medics do their field training. Coincidentally it is located just a little over a mile from the 12x20 foot office space where Klarisana first opened. This was the eclectic office in a storage unit which we affectionately referred to as “the smallest ketamine clinic in the world.” Over the next twenty years in the Army National Guard, I developed a close bond to the men and women in the United States Military...and to the families that stand behind them. Years later on 13MAY2007, the idea that eventually became Klarisana was set into motion. I was deployed with the 41st Brigade Combat Team on the Afghan-Pakistan border. Long story short...that morning my six-man Embedded Tactical Trainer team survived an ambush where we absolutely should have died. After escaping into the relative safety of a valley, we dismounted to set up our satellite radio in order call in air support for the Afghan forces who were actively fighting Pakistani elements. A Pakistani artillery shell came in and landed approximately 50 meters from our position...*it failed to detonate*. That day I firmly believe that I was saved twice. I was saved by the Holy Spirit for a reason. Since then I have been living on borrowed time to carry out a mission. The problem was that, at the time, I wasn’t quite sure what that mission was. Fast forward to 2014. I had another powerful experience that helped further set the stage for Klarisana. While working in a VA emergency department, I had the opportunity to take care of a former Marine. He was a rifleman who had served in Iraq during the

push into Fallujah. His wife brought him in...along with their two young children. She was sobbing and holding their two year old daughter. *“He’s not my husband...he’s not the man I married...I want my husband back”* she kept telling me. This Marine was taking Zoloft, Valium, Vicodin, and Seroquel. He was flat, apathetic, and emotionless. He had almost no ambition to do anything...except the desire to take his own life.





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He and his best friend from high school enlisted in the Marines together. The two of them went through basic training together and ultimately deployed to Iraq together. On a foot patrol in Fallujah, they spent their final day together as my patient watched an RPG end his friend's life. What could I say to him? How could I help him move past an event like that? How do I convince that Marine that he still has a reason for living and that he has a valuable contribution to make to society?

This patient really shook me up and, quite honestly, pissed me off. Even though we admitted him to the psychiatry service, I knew this was a temporary fix. I knew his mindset. He was a tough, mission-focused, Marine who was no stranger to violent action...and, like many combat veterans, he just didn't give a damn any more. For weeks afterwards I couldn't stop thinking about him. It just didn't make sense to me that we could effectively treat PTSD by "tweaking" veterans' brain chemistry or by inhibiting serotonin reuptake or by any other subtle modification of neurotransmitters. Talk therapy also clearly had its limits as many veterans are less than enthusiastic about "talking to a therapist." I believed that there had to be a better solution...one that represented a totally different paradigm of reshaping veterans' thought patterns and reframing their view of the world.

Shortly thereafter, I was talking about this patient with my buddy Rob Conrad. He is an ER nurse and a decorated former Army Ranger. He sent me a [2008 research paper](#) from the US Army Institute of Surgical Research. In this article, Dr. McGee and her team presented the serendipitous finding that burned service members who received ketamine to allow for the aggressive scrubbing of their burns had significantly less symptoms of PTSD than those who received other forms of sedation. My first reaction, like many clinicians was..."*ketamine for PTSD? Are you serious?*" This was absolutely fascinating and...if true...represented a radically different way to treat PTSD and depression.

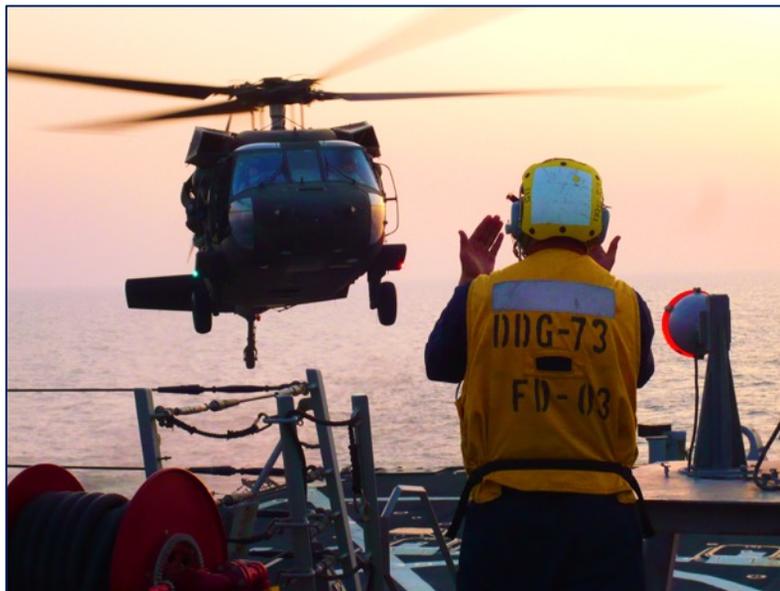




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At about the same time, a college friend of mine and photojournalist, David Guttenfelder, did an amazing photo essay for [Mission 22](#). Dave told a very powerful story of the gaping holes that are torn in the lives of the families of veterans who committed suicide after they returned home. His photos highlighted the dark irony of these service members' journey. They all survived combat deployments...only to take their own lives upon returning to their families. All of this made me feel that I had to find a way to make this treatment available to people who are locked into this dark downward spiral.

Shortly thereafter, I moved to San Antonio, Texas for a job opportunity. I started thinking about the possibility of opening a clinic which would offer ketamine infusion therapy to veterans and civilians alike so that we could offer a radically paradigm of treatment for depression and PTSD. At that time, there were very few providers of outpatient ketamine in the US. A couple of clinicians in south Texas were dabbling in it but no one had opened a clinic with the express purpose of providing this service. I spoke with a number of physicians I knew in San Antonio to see if someone would partner with me. The uniform answer was "you are crazy." Despite the lack of support from my fellow physicians, I felt called and convicted to go ahead and open what was to become Klarisana. Even though other physicians were too scared to embark on this path, I was blessed to have been surrounded by a group of mission-driven people who have helped create an amazing healthcare organization. You will see throughout this website that Klarisana is all about *mission* and *purpose*. I have a mission and a purpose *and so do you*. As I have said, I feel that I have been called to do this in order to save lives. The first unit I deployed to Iraq with was the 109th Area Support Medical Battalion (C Company). The motto on our unit crest was "Save to Serve Again." I never really thought about that much until I opened Klarisana. If you are reading this letter you have probably endured some horrible things...or you are reading it on behalf of someone you care about who has been to some dark places. Regardless of who you are or what your background is, I hope you will consider ketamine therapy at Klarisana because you do have a mission on this planet and you have a great deal to contribute to your family and to society. Our mission is to save you...so that you can truly serve again.



[Klarisana.com](http://Klarisana.com)



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The many veterans who have already been treated at Klarisana know that I and the other providers at Klarisana do not pull any punches with veterans. With civilians we use all the pleasantries that one would expect in American medicine. With veterans however we are going to be a little more “in-your-face.” I will tell you straight up that if you ultimately decide to end your life, then what you are doing is *normalizing* and *validating* the option of suicide for our fellow veterans. You are also normalizing it for your children and other members of your family. You will be the one that perpetuates the number 22. Those two young children that you have at home? If you kill yourself, then you just permanently imprinted in their minds that suicide is a valid course of action. If you kill yourself...you will ultimately become what we call in the Army, a “Blue Falcon.” If you don’t know what that means then Google it.

I would encourage you to contact us and let’s talk about whether ketamine might help. There is very little to lose and it might just get your life back. As we discuss elsewhere in this website, I believe that ketamine works through both a biochemical and an experiential component. Many clinicians and patients describe the intense transpersonal...transdimensional...and transformational journey that ketamine infusion therapy facilitates. The concept that the *experiential* aspect of a medicine can be therapeutic represents a real paradigm shift in western healthcare. Elsewhere in this website we go into detail about the Psychotropic Therapeutic Response. Take some time to learn about that. This element differentiates Klarisana from many other clinics.

As you can see, a fundamental part of our mission is to take care of combat veterans. If you have financial hardship we will do everything we can to get you help. We have worked with some private donors who have helped defray the cost for veterans. We also have set up a



non-profit organization called [Klarisana Outreach](#) and we are working to get some grants to help defray the cost for combat veterans. We are also working to be accepted into Tricare Prime. Be advised however that no one rides for free. If ketamine changes your life, then we need your help. We need your help educating the public, the medical community, and lawmakers about what ketamine can do to change the Number 22. Take a look at our [YouTube channel](#) and look at all the video [documentaries](#) that veterans have made.



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Keep in mind that we ask civilians to make videos too...*but in general they don't*. Most civilians are worried about what their boss, their coworkers, or their friends will think if they see them making a ketamine testimonial. They generally don't want to go on camera despite the fact their lives were transformed. Combat veterans are a special breed of person. You are the Sheepdogs. Y'all believe in a cause greater than yourself. Y'all have walked the talk and exemplified the teaching that *"there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends."*

Earlier in this letter I asked what I should say to that Marine I saw in the ER who watched an RPG pass through his best friend's chest. At the time I didn't have much to say...and that made me mad. As an ER doc, I am used to the idea that I should always be able to do *something*...but at the time there was little that I could say or do. Now I would tell him about ketamine. I would ask him..."if the friend who you lost were here today would he want you to kill yourself?" I very much doubt it. I suspect that he would actually want my patient to unscrew his mind and devote his life to helping fellow veterans. If he were alive today, he would remind his buddy that we all volunteered for a reason. We wanted to make the United States a safer place for our fellow citizens. If he was alive today, he would probably tell him to put on a black KIA bracelet and *do something* productive to honor the the ultimate sacrifice that he and countless others have made. Committing suicide does nothing to honor the legacy of those who have given everything for our Country.

The last thought I will leave you with is this. Think back to your childhood. Was there a veteran who made an impression on your life? Maybe that old guy in the wheelchair who landed on Omaha beach? Maybe that guy who parachuted out of a B-17 and landed into German captivity? There is no doubt that that person got a chance to look through the gates of Hell. What if they had chosen to end their lives after they came home? What if they hadn't brought their skills and experience back to work in this country? What if you had never had the opportunity to meet them and learn from them? Their service did not end the day their war ended...and neither should yours.

*Carl*

