

Behavior Health Concerns in Veterans Post Deployment

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Overview

Terrorist attacks on U.S. soil on 9/11/2001 led to deployment of U.S. troops to Afghanistan in 2001 called Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF); In 2003 U.S. troops were deployed to Iraq called Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)


Post deployment issues related to PTSD, TBI

Veterans do not report symptoms to their PCP's and civilian PCP's do not understand military culture

Women who are deployed leave behind small children

Many military receive healthcare outside the VA system

Need to integrate military culture and care for mental health concerns of Veterans post deployment in nurse practitioner curriculum



What is your perception of Veterans?

Brave, Courageous,
Ambitious, Hero, Strong,
Loyal, Disciplined,
Honorable, Dedicated,
Dependable, Compassionate,
Committed, Professional,
Resilient, Trained, Steadfast,
Vigilant, Patriotic, Capable

Injured, Substance-abusing,
Broken, Rigid, Demanding,
Hostile, PTSD, Violent,
Aggressive, Aloof, Callous,
Arrogant, Simple-minded,
Angry, Victimized, Alienated



Reality by the Numbers

30% have deployed once

30% have deployed two or more times

5 to 15% of OIF/OEF service members are estimated to have PTSD (if deployed)

7 to 8% of U.S. adults are estimated to have PTSD

10% of OIF/OEF service members are estimated to have depression

21% of Veterans receive their healthcare at the VA

22,448,000 Veterans in the U.S.

2,204,839 Active Duty

2,978,341 estimated family members of Active Duty and Guard/Reserve

OIF/OEF Veterans mean age = 32

Men (n=1038)

Women (n=197)

Military Culture



Military Culture can be defined as the sum total of all knowledge, beliefs, morals, customs, habits and capabilities acquired by Service members and their families through membership in military organizations

“It is much more important to know what sort of a patient has a disease, than what sort of disease a patient has.” William Osler (1849-1919)


Important to Identify Military-Connected Patients

ASK all patients if they are veterans

Screening tools: Insomnia Severity Index; PHQ-9;

Look for clues in the history and physical examination

Assess the following:

- How many times did they need to move around the country; years of service
 - Where were they deployed and for how long
 - What type (combat or not)
 - OIF/OEF Veterans with PTSD have a 2.5 times greater risk of opioid medication
 - Increase risk for hypertension, nervous system, musculoskeletal, circulatory, and digestive diseases as well as “ill-defined” symptoms
 - Avoidance of people or places
 - Aggressive behavior toward family and friends
 - Sleep disturbances/nightmares
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PTSD Treatment/VA/DoD Guidelines

Signs and Symptoms of PTSD

Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)

Significant benefit: SSRI's, SNRI's (except fluvoxamine)

Some benefit: mirtazapine, prazosin (for nightmares), TCA's

Harmful: benzodiazepines

Not supported: bupropion, buspirone, trazodone (as monotherapies), anticonvulsants or atypical antipsychotics (as monotherapies or adjunctive therapies)



Wrap Up

Most Veterans receive healthcare from civilian providers

Important to ask if a Veteran and screen for depression and PTSD

Complete a thorough history and physical examination

Important to consider cognitive therapy first and then medication and refer to psychologist who has experience caring for Veterans post deployment

Implement screening in your clinic

Implement Veterans' Health Care into curriculum



References

Apps for Providers: <http://t2health.org/products/mobile-apps>

Association of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapy: <http://www.abct.org>

American Board of Professional Psychology: <http://www.abpp.org>

Center for Deployment Psychology, Department of Medical and Clinical Psychology, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, Bethesda, MD, General@DeploymentPsych.org

www.DeploymentPsych.org/Military Culture

National Register of Health Service Psychologists: <http://www.nationalregister.org>

Give-an-Hour: <http://www.giveanhour.org> (for Veterans, spouses, unmarried partners, children, parents. Providers donate free weekly sessions)

Getting patients enrolled in the VA: 1-877-222-VETS (8387)

