Linking Returning Veterans in Rural Community Colleges to Mental Health Care

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Research Team

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Background

- 18.5% of the 1.7 million soldiers returning from OEF/OIF report symptoms consistent with PTSD or depression (Burnam et al, 2009).
- Remains critical to link OEF/OIF veterans with mental health problems to care in order to promote successful re-integration into a productive, civilian life.
- Community colleges represent an important rural setting through which we can promote veterans’ engagement with formal care.

22 Arkansas Community Colleges
Gap in Knowledge

Prior to designing an intervention to link student veterans in community colleges with services, we first must develop an improved understanding of:

- Prevalence of mental disorders
- Help-seeking patterns
- Barriers impeding student veterans from seeking treatment

To know if a unique intervention is needed for student veterans, we must understand how these barriers differ from those present in the general population of community college students.
8 ASU and UA Community Colleges in the Study
Specific Aims

1) Collect quantitative survey data on the mental health status of student veterans attending underserved community colleges, their help-seeking behavior, and their attitudes toward mental health care.

2) Using qualitative methods, achieve a deeper understanding of student veterans’ preferences regarding help-seeking and their attitudes toward interventions offering mental health screening and linkage to care.

3) Develop a new detection and linkage prototype.
   - Directly informed by the mixed quantitative and qualitative data in specific aims #1 and #2.
   - Developed in direct partnership with student veterans and their significant others.
Two Separate Funding Sources

• Department of Defense
  – Defense Medical Research and Development Program (DMRDP)
  – Applied Research and Advanced Technology Awards Program
  – 1.1 million over 3 years (12/10 to 12/13)

• NIMH
  – R-21 Funding Mechanism
  – 500 K over 2 years (1/11 to 12/12)
Two Separate Funding Sources

• DoD
  – Quantitative data collection from the student veteran sample via a web-based survey (Yr 1).
  – Qualitative data collection for intervention development via key participant interviews and focus groups (Yrs 2 and 3).

• NIMH R-21
  – Quantitative data collection from the civilian student comparison group via a web-based survey (Yrs 1 and 2).
Quantitative Hypotheses

1. Student veterans will demonstrate a higher prevalence of depression, PTSD, TBI, substance misuse, and suicidal ideation than traditional students.

2. Student veterans will demonstrate a lower prevalence of help-seeking than traditional students.

3. Lower help-seeking among student veterans will be mediated by malleable factors, including low social support, low perceived need, and high stigma.
Future Directions

• Submit an R34 application to support the development of a screening and linkage intervention for civilian students attending community colleges (if they are found to be different from student veterans).

• Submit a K-23 with the eventual goal of developing a community college-based, rural practice based research network.

• Eventually test the R34 intervention in a randomized trial with R01 funding.