Military Related PTSD and Suicide Prevention
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Abstract:
The cost of serving in the military can be significant to those who made that decision, physically and mentally. One of the difficulties that service members or veterans face is Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD has many causes, symptoms and affects many service members and veterans. However, there are treatment options available. Another result that is too common is suicide. Like PTSD, there are many causes, signs and treatment options for those who are thinking about or have attempted suicide. It is our goal to recognize and raise awareness for the sacrifices that these men and women bravely made.

What is PTSD?
“a psychiatric disorder that may occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, a serious accident, a terrorist act, war/combat, or rape who have been threatened with death, sexual violence or serious injury” (American Psychological Association).

Statistics:
• More than 90% of service members and veterans are exposed to traumatic events either in the military or at some other point in their lives (Cozza et al., 2014a)
• Number of those with PTSD from military related trauma range from 11-30% depending on era served
• 300,000 veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan have been diagnosed with PTSD (VLB, 2017)

12.0%
6.8%
87%

Incidence of PTSD among U.S. veterans
Incidence of PTSD among the general population
Percentage of veterans exposed to potentially traumatic events
Average number of potentially traumatic events experienced by veterans

History of Suicide in the Military:
“Historically, service members in the U.S. military have experienced a lower suicide rate than the civilians of the same age and sex in the general population.” (Cox, Daniel W., et al., 2014, pg. 185)

S.A.V.E. (Immediate relief tactic for suicidal veterans and military)
S- Signs of Suicidal Thinking
A- Ask the most important question of all
V- Validate the veteran’s experience
E- Encourage treatment and expedite getting help

(Vaule, L., 2021, SAVE+Training, Slide 23)

Symptoms:
• Flashbacks
• Nightmares
• Intense feelings (e.g. anger, fear, sadness)
• Detached or isolated from people

Symptoms may develop right away or may take several months to come forward

Treatments:
• Service dogs have shown to have significant positive impacts on veterans who face symptoms of PTSD
• Various types of psychotherapy
• Medication

Veterans can press 1 to talk to the Veteran Crisis Line:
500 trained responders
Chat and text
International response
Walk through situations and to other resources
Responders follow up and refer to local care

National Suicide Prevention Hotline
1-800-273-8255

Resources:


Naugle, L. (2021, February 22) S.A.V.E.+Training

(Sources and statistics found at HPA’s website and Hill and Ponton’s website)