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?- 

PTSD is “...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).

Symptoms-

- Flashbacks
- Nightmares
- Intense feelings (e.g. anger, fear, sadness)
- Detached or isolated with people

Symptoms may develop right away or take several months to come forward.
PTSD Statistics in the Military-

Statistics-
- In 2014, 4.3 million veterans reported a service-related disability including a high-rate of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury.
- 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.
- Number of those with PTSD from military trauma range from 11-30% (depending on the era served).
Treatments for PTSD -

1) Service dogs have shown to have significant positive impacts on veterans who face symptoms of PTSD (as well other psychological and physical results of time served)

2) Various types of psychotherapy

3) Medication
“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)

- This lower rate may have been due to the military’s prescreening of their applicants for mental health and criminality. (Cox, Daniel W., et al., 2014)

- Increase in the suicide rate of U.S. army after the end of Operation Iraqi freedom. (Cox, Daniel W., et al., 2014)

- 2009 the Army’s suicide rate exceeded the general population.

- This pattern was also mirrored in the Marine Corps.
Vulnerability Factors for Suicide -

- More research has been done on the factors that result in suicidal risk
- Developed a Vulnerability Stress Model

Vulnerability Factors -

- Mental Disorders
- Prior Suicidal Behaviors
- Psychological Risk Factors
- Family History
- Demographic Factors (Male Vs Female Ratio)
- Stressful Life Experiences
- Situational Factors
Vulnerability Factors:

- Mental Disorders
- Family History
- Prior Suicidal Behaviors
- “Person who attempts suicide is 40 times more likely to eventually die by suicide.”

- Psychological Risk Factors
- “Specific risk factors include personality traits, temperament, and other cognitive affective states”
Vulnerability Factors Continued-

- Demographic Factors (Male Vs Female Ratio)
  - Women in the U.S. are more likely to attempt suicide than men, men are four times more likely to die by suicide.

- Situational Factors-
  - Military having training and access to firearms.

- Stressful Life Experiences-
  - “Suicidal behavior often follows are stressful life events.”
S.A.V.E. Method-

S.A.V.E.-

S- Signs of suicidal thinking should be recognized.
A- Ask the most important question of all.
- “Are you thinking about killing yourself?”
V- Validate the veteran’s experience.
E- Encourage treatment and Expedite getting help.

(Naugle, L., 2021, Slide 23)
Treatments:

- Social and Community support
- Mental Health Treatment
- Pharmacotherapy
- Psychotherapy
- Weapons Management
- Continuity of Care
Treatments for those who have lost a veteran loved one to suicide

- After a veteran completed suicide there was not much contact for the families and other people impacted by the veteran.

Postvention-

- Check-ins with veteran family, friends, and providers.
- Supportive handouts within the first month through the first year
- Making sure that people impacted are getting the right support and help.
Resources -

Veteran’s Crisis Line - 1 (800)-273-8255
- 500 trained responders
- Chat and text
- International response
- Walk them through the situation and go to other resources
- Responders will follow up with the person and refer them to local care

www.BeThereForVeterans.com
- Allows you to show your support by talking and texting veterans

Coaching into Care - (888)-823-7458
- Helps for people supporting veteran to encourage veteran to seek help and support.

(Naugle, L., 2021, Slide 49-53)
Works Cited-


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