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## BATTLEMIND

Soldiers are trained to comport themselves with specific behaviors and emotions in order to keep them alive on the battlefield. Many of these emotions are not appropriate for their home lives. The BATTLEMIND training assists soldiers with recognizing combat skills that may be disrupting their home life when they try to reintegrate into civilian society<sup>1</sup>:

- Buddies (cohesion) vs. Withdrawal
- Accountability vs. Controlling
- Targeted Aggression vs. Inappropriate Aggression
- Tactical Awareness vs. Hypervigilance
- Lethally Armed vs. Locked and Loaded at Home
- Emotional Control vs. Anger/Detachment
- Mission Operational Security vs. Secretiveness
- Individual Responsibility vs. Guilt
- Non-Defensive (combat) Driving vs. Aggressive Driving
- Discipline and Ordering vs. Conflict

## Service Learning Project

After learning about the vast resources available to veterans and the difficulties associated with finding them, we created a **Veteran Services Reference Sheet** which will aid healthcare workers in accessing programs to better serve their veteran patients. Our intention is to make this form available in each UMASS clinic, Worcester Free Clinics, and hand them out at the upcoming third year medical student Veterans Health Interstitial day. We also plan to help facilitate and assist with planning for the upcoming Interstitial day.



## Acknowledgements

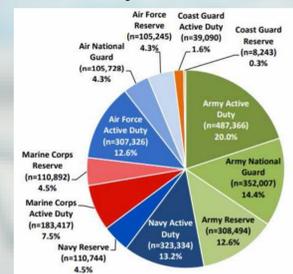
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## Have you or a loved one served in the military?

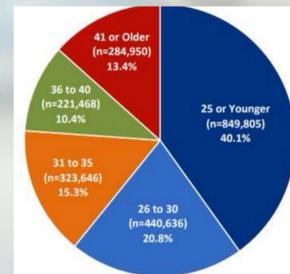
... and other questions every provider should ask:

- Which branch did you serve in?
- When did you serve?
- What was your MOS (job in the military)?
- Have you ever deployed, when and where?
- Are you connected to the VA?

Summary of Active Duty and Ready Reserve, 2015<sup>2</sup>



Age of Total Military Force, 2015<sup>2</sup>



As of 2015, the total military force was 2,120,504 individuals, 16.8% of whom were female.<sup>2</sup>

It is estimated that there are roughly 20 million veterans living in the US in 2017.<sup>3</sup> In 2016, the Gulf War Era veterans became the largest group.<sup>3</sup> The smallest cohort of living veterans are from World War II.<sup>3</sup> The Korean Conflict, Vietnam Era, Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), Operation New Dawn (OND), and peacetime veterans make up the remaining portion of the veteran cohort.

Population Health Clerkship – Fall 2017

## Mental Health & Suicide

- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a state of hypervigilance due to a previous exposure that led to prolonged activation of the "fight-or flight response"<sup>4</sup>
- The modulation of brain activity is thought to involve the amygdala and limbic system, brainstem, and hypothalamus<sup>4</sup>
- PTSD is an anxiety disorder that is characterized by triggering events characterized by avoidance behaviors, hyperreactivity and changes in cognition and mood<sup>4</sup>
- On average 20 veterans died by suicide each day in 2014<sup>5</sup>
- Veterans accounted for 18% of all deaths by suicide in the US in 2014<sup>5</sup>

**Veteran Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255 or text a message to 838255**  
**Both are free and confidential**

## Therapeutic Approaches

Cognitive Behavioral therapy (CBT) is the first line of treatment for PTSD<sup>6</sup>

- Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) helps identify negative thoughts that are related to a specific event and how they cause stress and focuses on replacing those thoughts<sup>6</sup>
  - Prolonged Exposure (PE) allows the patient to revisit the traumatic experience in a safe, clinical setting in order to retrain reactions to those memories<sup>6</sup>
- Complementary Alternative Medicine (CAM) Therapies have also proven to be effective in stress management, anxiety disorders, PTSD, depression and back pain<sup>7</sup>

- Therapies that fall under the CAM umbrella are acupuncture, meditation, relaxation and yoga<sup>7</sup>
  - 89% of VA facilities offer some form of CAM therapy<sup>7</sup>
- Benzodiazepines can worsen anxiety and cognitive impairment and increase aggression in patients with PTSD<sup>8</sup>
- Long-term benzodiazepine use is associated with a 50% increase in overall mortality<sup>8</sup>
  - In 2012, 30% of veterans with PTSD were prescribed benzodiazepines in the VA system<sup>8</sup>

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