Explorative Study of Barriers to Care for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Among Combat Veterans from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom

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Barriers to Care for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Among Combat Veterans from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom

**Background**

According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, PTSD occurs when "The person was exposed to: death, threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, or actual or threatened sexual violence." PTSD symptoms include intrusion symptoms, avoidance behavior, negative alterations in cognitions and mood, and alterations in arousal and reactivity. Providing education en mass to returning service personal may prove to be a cost effective method for increasing treatment rates for PTSD among current combat Veterans.

**Methods**

Study design and interview questions were influenced by previous works. Using one-on-one interviews, common themes were identified for barriers to accessing care in domains of Institutional and Logistical concerns, as well as stigma related concerns. Stigma was differentiated into domains of Social, Occupational, and Institutional stigma. Inclusion criteria will be Combat Veterans from Operations Iraq/ Enduring Freedom that attend Boise State with diagnosis or self report of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, regardless of age, gender or ethnicity.

**Discussion**

While motivations for timing and ultimately the decision to seek care varied among participants, one common pattern emerged from the data. The participants began with feelings of guilt, shame and confusion regarding their personal experience with PTSD. Once the participants engaged in care of one form or another for PTSD, these feelings were almost entirely mitigated, not by modalities of treatment, but by simple education regarding what PTSD is and how it works. While PTSD symptoms remained, these negative feelings, which directly contributed to avoidance of seeking care for PTSD, were alleviated. Further research should focus on the mitigating factor of education on PTSD among this cohort, while employing a larger sample.

**References**

1) http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/PTSD-overview/dsm5_criteria_ptsd.asp