An Overview of PTSD and Treatment Perspectives Among Native American Veterans

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History of PTSD and Native American Veterans

• What is PTSD

• History of PTSD

• A brief history of Native American veterans
• 5 to 17% of returning Veterans suffer from combat related Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

• Research regarding Native American Veterans is lacking

• Native Veterans greatly underutilize services to treat PTSD

• Equine Therapy is becoming more popular for treatment of PTSD
Purpose and Participants

This study seeks to gain an understanding of:

- Attitudes toward PTSD
- Perceptions about PTSD
- Willingness to engage in therapy
- Barriers to seeking treatment
- Facilitators of treatment

- Sample - 588 individuals who identify themselves as Native American Veterans.
  - 478 male
  - 110 female
- represent all branches of the U.S. military.
Instruments

• cross-sectional survey design

• Containing 40 items

• 39 quantitative

• 1 qualitative

• Administered via Survey Monkey.
Procedure

• Contacted social media sites for:
  • All federally recognized Veteran Service Organizations
  • All state and federally recognized Native American Nations
  • Organizations and nations were asked to help circulate word of the study

• Participants had the option of requesting a hard copy

• Results were imported into SPSS

• Descriptive statistics of data ran.

• A content analysis was conducted on qualitative data
Results

Gender

- Men: 82%
- Woman: 18%

Branch of Service

- Navy: 48%
- Army: 24%
- Marine Corps: 19%
- Air Force: 16%
- Coast Guard: 2%
Results: Barriers to treatment

- Appearing weak
- Denial that problem exists
- Drug/Alcohol Use
- Fear of what others think
- Lack of Tx. Options
- Lack of resources
- Discomfort w/ Diagnosis

The bar graph shows the frequency of each barrier to treatment. The highest barrier is Fear of what others think.
Results: facilitators of Tx.
Results: likeliness to engage in TX./healing
Results

Likeliness to Engage in AAT

Perceived Helpfulness of AAT
Results

Aware of others diagnosed with PTSD

- Yes: 89%
- No: 7%
- Unsure: 4%

Did your perception of this person change?

- Positively: 13.5%
- Negatively: 3%
- Unsure: 11.5%
- Did not change: 72%
Do most veterans who suffer from PTSD receive adequate treatment?

- Yes: 77%
- No: 19%
- Unsure: 4%
Veterans’ Voices

• Natives need a different approach to treatment. A trusted brother, a friend, etc. It needs to be based on the old ways included with modern technology. 8

• There are so many barriers to getting help that it's not worth the frustration of the process. I want to see an open forum group where it's completely anonymous, no paperwork necessary to get help. 12

• Native veterans will open and trust other native veterans, military veterans speak a different language. I would only go to Groups run by veterans. 13
Veterans’ Voices

• There is extreme bias experienced by this person from counselors. The counselors ... lack a knowledge and experience with military and native peoples. 77

• The distance to travel for treatment is very bad. Most don't have anyone to go to who understands. 37

• A well grounded knowledge of the cultural background of the patient will be of great assistance and would give focus toward the healing process. 175
Discussion

• Native Veterans are generally unsatisfied with services provided them and view them as being inadequate.

• They desire programs that have staff that are veterans and who can understand their experiences in the military as well as their Native background.

• More facilities and programs designed to treat PTSD should be formed near major populations of Native Veterans.

• Cost for participation in programs should be significantly reduced or free to participants.

• Programs should be designed to address both primary and secondary symptoms of PTSD, such as drug or alcohol abuse.

• Native American Veterans are not likely to have other Native Veterans view them negatively due to having PTSD.
Limitations and Future Directions of Study

• The survey relied on self-report

• Native American are not a homogenous group, cultural aspects can differ slightly from tribe to tribe.

• More studies needed to replicate and strengthen research

• A more detailed look at differences between cohorts should be conducted to see if preferred aspects of treatment differ

• Qualitative study should also be done to provide depth of information on key findings

• Pilot studies should be conducted
For more information regarding results from the survey please contact Greg Urquhart at Greg.Urquhart@wsu.edu