

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Traumatic Brain Injury among US Active Duty Military Personnel and Negative Drinking-Related Consequences

Adams, R. S., Larson, M. J., Corrigan, J. D., Ritter, G. A., & Williams, T. V. (2013). Traumatic brain injury among US active duty military personnel and negative drinking-related consequences. *Substance Use & Misuse*, 48(10), 821-836. doi:10.3109/10826084.2013.797995.

SUMMARY: Many Service members struggle with both alcohol abuse and traumatic injuries. This study investigated whether traumatic brain injuries and alcohol abuse were associated by surveying various Service members from branches of the military. Findings suggest there may be an association between experiencing a traumatic brain injury and negative drinking-related consequences.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Negative drinking-related consequences were higher for those who screened positive for posttraumatic stress disorder.
- Of the study population, 9.7% reported a traumatic brain injury after being exposed to an injury during their most recent deployment.
- Negative drinking-related consequences were higher among males, younger age groups, singles, those with less education, those who were Latino, and those in the Army.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Provide education for Service members about how to avoid excessive amounts of alcohol after a potential traumatic brain injury
- Host support groups and disseminate resources for the Service members who exhibit unhealthy drinking habits
- Provide referrals to a mental health professional for families and Service members who suffer from a traumatic brain injury and negative drinking habits

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support programs that encourage Service members to learn about self-care and how to engage in healthy habits and coping skills after a traumatic accident
- Encourage the development and continuation of programs that help Service members cope with reintegration with their families post-deployment
- Recommend education for military family members on how to support their loved one after a traumatic brain injury

This product is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with The University of Minnesota.



Putting Research to Work for Military Families



METHODS

- The 2008 Department of Defense Survey of Health Related Behaviors among Active Duty Military Personnel was completed anonymously by 28,546 Active Duty military personnel.
- Service members were selected by separating the population into 12 groups based on pay grade and gender.
- The final study sample included 42.8% of participants who were home for 6-7 months, 34.9% who were home for 8-9 months, 11.8% who were home for 10 months and 10.5% who were home for 11 months of the past year.
- In the survey, participants were asked to answer 22 questions about negative drinking-related consequences they experienced in the past 12 months.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants consisted of 3,350 Active Duty military personnel. Of the participants, 27% were in the Army, 66.7% were White/Non-Latino, 15% were Black/Non-Latino, 9.8% were Latino, and 8.4% other.
- Of the Service members who participated in the study, 42.8% were home for 6-7 months, 34.9% were home for 8-9 months, 11.8% were home for 10 months, and 10.5% were home for 11 months of the past year.
- The majority of the sample was enlisted personnel who had at least two deployments since 9/11/01.

LIMITATIONS

- This study relied on self-report from Service members instead of medical records; therefore, it is unclear if Service members had a formal diagnosis of a traumatic brain injury.
- This study cannot make strong inferences about the association between traumatic brain injury and negative drinking related consequences because data was taken at only one time point.
- Data may have been inaccurate due to the participants self-report of negative consequences related to drinking, because factors such as distrust and social desirability may have led some participants to under-report.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Design and implement preventative interventions for those with a traumatic brain injury with a loss of consciousness
- Explore different methods of studying negative drinking-related consequences to better understand the limitations of self-reporting due to distrust or social desirability
- Examine drinking behaviors prior to deployment as well as post deployment to see how these patterns may have changed

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



For more information about the Assessing Research that Works rating scale visit:
<https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works>