



Sleep Problems May Mediate Associations between Rumination and PTSD And Depressive Symptoms among OIF/OEF Veterans.

Borders, A., Rothman, D. J., & McAndrew, L. M. (2015). Sleep problems may mediate associations between rumination and PTSD and depressive symptoms among OIF/OEF veterans. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 7(1), 76-84. doi:10.1037/a0036937

SUMMARY: To examine the relationship between rumination and mental health, 89 Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans completed assessments of PTSD, depression, sleep problems, and trait rumination (tendency to obsess about a troubling situation). A two-way relationship emerged, with rumination leading to greater sleep problems, and sleep problems leading to increased symptoms of PTSD and depression.

KEY FINDINGS

- Greater rumination was associated with more sleep problems, including difficulty staying asleep, fewer hours of sleep, and difficulty staying awake during the day.
- Greater rumination was significantly correlated with both PTSD and depression.
- The relationships between rumination and mental health symptoms were affected by global sleep problems, sleep disturbance, and daytime fatigue.
- Sleep quality was not related to PTSD or depressive symptoms.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS

Programs could:

- Provide sleep training and relaxation services for Veterans
- Offer classes for Veterans to help them identify when cognitive re-assessment becomes problematic rumination
- Provide classes for family members of Veterans with PTSD, explaining common challenges related to sleep and how they can be supportive

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES

Policies could:

- Recommend continued provision of on-site counseling services for Service members who have experienced trauma
- Allocate resources to professional development for chaplains, therapists, and other military mental health service providers to enable them to identify and help Veterans who have rumination tendencies
- Afford Service members time in their schedules to engage in regular wellness activities to help build resilience and manage mental health symptoms

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



METHODS

- Veterans completed self-report measures of rumination, sleep problems, PTSD, and depression.
- Veterans who completed comprehensive clinical evaluations between 2004 and 2010 were invited to participate.
- Veterans were recruited from the Department of Veterans Affairs New Jersey War Related Illness and Injury Study Center.

PARTICIPANTS

- Of the 1,200 Veterans who completed the evaluation, 29% (n=89) completed the follow-up questionnaire that is the basis for this study.
- 87% of the Veterans were male.
- Mean age was 39 years (SD=11).
- Race: 39% White, 30% Latino, 18% Black, 3% Asian.

LIMITATIONS

- As data are cross-sectional, it is not possible to determine causal relationships between the constructs.
- Mental health symptoms were measured using self-reported, retrospective data, both of which may introduce biases.
- The sample population consists of Veterans who sought treatment, and may not reflect Veterans in general.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Future research may more fully examine the relationships between rumination and mental health, possibly through qualitative methods.
- Future research might examine whether rumination results in mental fatigue which may diminish work performance.
- Future research may examine whether post-deployment rumination is related to pre-deployment rumination tendencies.

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS

