

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Modeling Risk For Intimate Partner Violence Among Recent-era Veteran-partner Dyads

Kelley, M. L., Montano, H.G., Lam, N., Hernandez, M., Miller, M. M., & Workgroup, V. M. A. M. (2017). Modeling risk for intimate partner violence among recent-era veteran-partner dyads. *Journal of Family Violence*, 5(32), 505-512. doi:10.1007/s10896-016-9903-2

SUMMARY: This study examines the association between post-traumatic stress symptoms (PTSS), drug abuse, and partner violence on recent Veterans and their partners. Participants in this study included 49 Veteran-partner couples examined over a three year post-deployment period to investigate the relationship between Veterans' PTSS, Veterans' and partners' drug abuse symptoms (e.g., abuse of prescription drugs, drug induced blackouts, or flashbacks), and perpetration of intimate partner violence (IPV). Findings of the study indicate that Veterans' PTSS is a good predictor of Veterans' drug abuse symptoms and that Veteran's drug abuse symptoms is strongly associated with Veterans' perpetration of intimate partner violence.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Drug abuse symptoms in Veterans three years after post-deployment were predicted by PTSS at post deployment. This was not true for their partners.
- Veterans who demonstrated drug abuse symptoms at three years post-deployment, and their partners, reported engagement in IPV.
- Partners who demonstrated drug abuse symptoms at three years post-deployment did not report engagement in IPV. Veterans with partners who demonstrated drug abuse symptoms at three years post-deployment also did not report engagement in IPV.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Facilitate support group opportunities for Service members and partners up to three years after post-deployment
- Introduce training modules focused on learning healthy coping skills during demobilization with regular follow-up opportunities during post-deployment for both Service members and partners
- Offer courses on communication, problem solving, and conflict management for Service members and their partners up to three years post deployment

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Encourage collaboration with community-based organizations to connect Service members and their partners with mental health and drug abuse resources while in post-deployment.
- Recommend professional education on drug abuse and IPV for professionals who work with Service members and their families post deployment.
- Promote awareness of drug abuse symptoms, IPV, and resources to Service members and their partners up to three years post-deployment.

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METHODS

- Data for this study were collected from a larger study investigating mental health illnesses in Veterans who have served post September 11, 2001.
- Information on PTSS were collected from Veterans in the initial study through 17 questions that allowed them to self assess their levels of PTSS.
- Data on drug abuse symptoms and IPV were collected from both Veterans and their partners through a follow up survey three years later. This survey included 20 questions assessing drug use and 12 questions assessing perpetration of minor or severe violence in the past year.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 49 Veterans (43 male Veterans and 6 female Veterans) who served post September 11, 2001 and their partners.
- Thirty-four of the couples included in this study had at least one child living at home.
- Majority of these couples were White (66%) with under a third of these couples were Black.
- The average age of the participants in the study were 36 years at post-deployment and 39.3 years at the three year follow-up period.

LIMITATIONS

- The definition of IPV only included physical violence which limits the findings of this study from being applied to other forms of violence.
- The small sample size used in this study included a larger percentage of male Veterans versus female Veterans which prevents application of the findings to other types of Service member couples (e.g., female Veteran couples).
- The study focused solely on the association between PTSS, drug abuse symptoms, and IPV; findings cannot account for the impact of or be generalized to other mental illnesses.
- Drug abuse symptoms and reports of IPV were measured by self-reports. Self-reports may be biased as it requires the Veterans and their partners to recall past information and report it accurately.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Expand the study to include other family members, especially children
- Examine PTSS with other forms of violence
- Explore how treatments between post-deployment and the three year period may impact these results

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