

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence Among Women Veterans who Utilize Veterans Health Administration Primary Care

Kimerling, R., Iverson, K. M., Dichter, M. E., Rodriguez, A. L., Wong, A., & Pavao, J. (2016). Prevalence of intimate partner violence among women veterans who utilize veterans health administration primary care. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 31(8), 888-894. doi:10.1007/s11606-016-3701-7

SUMMARY: Identification of the prevalence of past-year intimate partner violence (IPV) among women Veterans, utilizing Veterans Health Administration primary care, and associations with demographic, military, and primary care characteristics was conducted. Using data from a national survey, findings suggest a notable prevalence of IPV among women Veterans under 55 years old.

KEY FINDINGS:

- The prevalence of past-year IPV among surveyed women Veterans was 19%, with higher rates (22% - 26%) among women under 55 years of age.
- Past-year IPV was associated with women's service during Vietnam to post-Vietnam eras, less than 10 years of service, and experiences of Military Sexual Trauma.
- Compared with women who did not report past-year IPV, women who reported IPV had more primary care visits, yet experienced lower continuity of care across providers.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Continue providing training opportunities for professionals working with Service members and their families to learn more about IPV and its effects on the individual as well as their family
- Engage female Service members and their intimate partners in classes that aim to increase communication and decrease physical or verbal aggression
- Disseminate information regarding possible warning signs of intimate partner violence to professionals working with Service members and their families

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Promote the development of structured workshops for Service members and their partners on healthy relationships
- Encourage awareness among professionals working with female Service members and their partners on the importance of developing programming and support for IPV victims
- Recommend collaboration between DoD programs and local community organizations to support treatment programs for female Service members who are IPV victims

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METHODS

- The study sample came from the 6,046 women Veterans that completed the WOMAN (Women's Overall Mental Health Assessment of Needs) survey, a national telephone survey.
- The humiliation, afraid, rape, kick (HARK) IPV screening tool was used to determine women Veterans past-year IPV.
- Quantitative analysis was conducted to determine what, if any, associations there were between women Veterans' past-year IPV and military or primary care experiences.

PARTICIPANTS

- At the time of the study 44% of the women Veterans were married, 40% were divorced, and 16% had never been married.
- Twenty-one percent of the women Veterans were a part of the Air Force, 51% the Army, 22% the Navy, and 6% the Marines.
- Participants identified as White (67%), as Black (23%), and Other (10%).

LIMITATIONS

- The survey was conducted over the phone, which for more sensitive issues could limit what people are willing to share with a stranger.
- Recall bias of the women Veterans about past traumatic events could have impacted IPV prevalence estimates; therefore, results should be noted with caution.
- This study focused only on women Veterans who were apart of the Veterans Health Administration primary care system; therefore, results are not generalizable.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Evaluate effective treatment programs for female Service members IPV victims
- Investigate what both the short and long term effects are on women Veterans' who are IPV victims
- Explore the long-term health consequences of experiencing intimate partner violence, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and involvement in health risk behaviors like alcohol use

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