

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

The Feasibility of a Web Intervention For Military and Veteran Spouses Concerned About Their Partner's Alcohol Misuse

Osilla, K. C., Pedersen, E. R., Tolpadi, A., Howard, S. S., Phillips, J. L., & Gore, K. L. (2016). The feasibility of a web intervention for military and veteran spouses concerned about their partner's alcohol misuse. *Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research*, 45(1), 57-73. doi:10.1007/s11414-016-9546-3

SUMMARY: A number of US military Service Members and Veterans experience heavy drinking which may impair their military readiness. A civilian-based Community Reinforcement and Family Training (CRAFT) intervention was adapted into a 4-session web-based intervention to provide an accessible intervention for Service members' and Veterans' concerned partners. Findings showed improvements in both communication and management of the partner's drinking after completion of the web-based intervention.

KEY FINDINGS:

- The concerned partners overall reported that the sessions were moderately to very helpful.
- All participants indicated moderate confidence in talking to their partner about his/her drinking after the completion of the sessions.
- Approximately 84% of the responses showed that participants would recommend the web-based intervention sessions to a friend or family member with similar concerns.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Educate Service members, Veterans, and their spouses and partners on problematic coping mechanisms upon returning home (i.e., drinking)
- Provide workshops to spouses and partners of Service members to learn about available supportive resources
- Offer pre and post-deployment support groups for the spouses and partners of Service members who are struggling with substance abuse

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Recommend education of professionals on the possible side effects Service members experience post-deployment
- Continue to support programs that address challenges that the spouses and partners of Service members encounter
- Encourage collaboration between military-based and community-based intervention programs to help military families reintegrate smoothly after deployment

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METHODS

- Participants were recruited through Facebook military pages or targeted ads.
- Concerned partner participants were considered eligible if they completed a screening questionnaire, a baseline survey, the 4-session web-based intervention, a usability survey after each session, and a phone debriefing interview.
- The web-based interventions contained four 30-45 minute sessions with content on positive communication skills and identifying positive reinforcement strategies when spouse or partner drinks.
- A structured phone interview was completed at the end of the four sessions measuring overall impression of the program.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants included 12 concerned partners of either Active Duty Service members or post-9/11 Veterans.
- All participants were female, mostly white (N=10), and 37.5 years old (SD=10.4 years).
- The majority of the participants were married to their Service member and/or Veteran partner and all reported having children.
- The Service member or Veterans of the concerned partners had an average age of 38 years old (SD= 8.1) and were mostly white (n=10).

LIMITATIONS

- This study's small sample size means that the results may not generalize to the larger military population.
- The entirety of the participants were concerned persons, therefore the study lacked the perspectives of the concerned partner.
- The recruitment method used limits the variability within the participants by only targeting individuals who had interests in specific organizations.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Evaluate the outcomes of the web-based adaptation on a larger sample size to increase the study's validity
- Incorporate multiple measures i.e., questionnaires and surveys) of the concerned partner's management of their partner's drinking
- Analyze the Service member and/or veteran's coping mechanisms for drinking after the web-based intervention

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