

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Efficacy of a Web-based Intervention for Concerned Spouses of Service Members and Veterans with Alcohol Misuse

Osilla, K.C., Trail, T.E., Pedersen, E.R., Gore, K.L., Tolpadi, A., & Rodriguez, L.M. (2017). Efficacy of a web-based intervention for concerned spouses of service members and veterans with alcohol misuse. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*. doi:10.1111/jmft.12279

SUMMARY: An examination of a web-based treatment approach for concerned partners of Service members and Veterans who misuse alcohol was conducted. Pre- and post-test data assessing mental health, communication, and conflict resolution skills were collected from two groups: those receiving the web-based training and a control group who did not complete the training. Results from the study suggest that web-based interventions may be a helpful option for concerned partners with help-seeking barriers or those lacking access to traditional care.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Concerned partners who completed the web-based intervention reported significant improvements in relationship quality and decreases in family conflict.
- Both the web-based intervention group and the control group reported that they perceived decreases in their partners' alcohol misuse.
- Compared to the control group, the web-based intervention group reported decreases in both anxiety and depressive symptoms at follow-up.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Disseminate information regarding resources for concerned partners of a Service member or Veteran with alcohol misuse, including web-based interventions
- Engage concerned partners of Service members or Veterans with alcohol misuse in classes that work to enhance self-care and increase positive communication patterns
- Provide information for concerned partners regarding how to reinforce their partners' sobriety and discourage their alcohol misuse

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Promote the development of web-based interventions for concerned partners of Service members and Veterans who misuse alcohol
- Continue to support programs that address the unique challenges of couples and families in the military with a family member who misuses alcohol
- Encourage education for service providers regarding how the misuse of alcohol by a Service member or Veteran may affect their intimate partners

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METHODS

- A web-based adaptation of the Community Reinforcement and Family Training (CRAFT) for military concerned partners, titled Partners Connect, was developed.
- Participants were randomly assigned to complete the Partners Connect program or were placed on a wait-list control group.
- Every participant completed a baseline and follow-up survey. Concerned partners completed four 30-45 minute sessions conducted a week apart.
- Researchers analyzed the efficacy of a web-based platform to reduce the mental health symptoms of concerned partners and if the participants' involvement modified their partners' drinking habits.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants (n=312) who completed the study met the following criteria: at least 18 years old, living with their partner, and no plans of separating from their partner for at least 60 days.
- Most concerned partners identified as female (95%) and had an average age of 32 years old with 71% of concerned partners identifying as White, 9% Multiracial, 6% Black, and 4% Latino.
- Most concerned partners (88%) reported that their partner drank heavily (five or more drinks at one occasion) at least once in the past month.

LIMITATIONS

- Since the sample primarily consisted of White women, the results may not be apply to individuals of different race/ethnic, age, or gender groups.
- Since the control group received the web-based intervention after the active treatment group, there may be an overestimation of intervention effects.
- The data on the partners' drinking misuse were collected from the perspective of the concerned partner, possibly resulting in self-report bias.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Conduct a study with a longer follow-up period to further examine effects over time.
- Examine factors that contribute to how a concerned partner's involvement in alcohol misuse interventions, such as Partners Connect, may lead to reductions in their partner's drinking.
- Recruit and involve male concerned partner perspectives or partners in same-sex relationships.

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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