

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



**Focus:**  
Multiple  
Branches

## Injury-Related Hospital Admissions of Military Dependents Compared with Similarly Aged Nonmilitary Insured Infants, Children, and Adolescents

Pressley, J. C., Dawson, P., & Carpenter, D. J. (2012). Injury-related hospital admissions of military dependents compared with similarly aged nonmilitary insured infants, children, and adolescents. *Trauma and Acute Care Surgery*, 73(4), S236-S242. doi:10.1097/TA.0b013e31827035f2

**SUMMARY:** In this epidemiological study, researchers examined injury in infants, children, and adolescents of military and nonmilitary parents. Injury-related hospital admissions were approximately 20% higher among military youth than their civilian counterparts. Injury risk for military dependents may be higher and prevention efforts may be important to reduce this risk. Injury risk for military dependents may be higher and prevention efforts may be important to reduce this risk.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Injury-related hospital admissions were 20% higher in military compared to nonmilitary dependents; intracranial injury in very young children was higher in military than nonmilitary dependents.
- Compared to nonmilitary dependents, mental health diagnoses (i.e., affective, anxiety, and behavioral disorders) were higher in every age category (0-4 years, 5-9 years, 10-14 years, 15-17 years) of military dependents.
- Although the risk difference was small, military adolescents had higher suicide attempts and poisonings from medicinal substances than nonmilitary adolescents.
- Compared with nonmilitary teens, military teens aged 15-17 years had a 34% higher rate of alcohol abuse and 15% higher rate of substance abuse.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Tailor efforts to meet the unique needs of military families and their dependents dealing with mental health issues
- Train service providers in evidence-based practices shown to reduce mental health disorders among military youth
- Disseminate information regarding injury prevention and the unique risks among military children

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support programs designed to promote public safety among Service members and their families
- Encourage the development of programs to include substance abuse prevention information in military youth programming to reduce the risk of substance use
- Recommend education to service providers regarding the unique risk factors of military children related to mental and physical health

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## METHODS

- Data from the Kid Health Care Cost and Utilization Project 2006 (KID), which contains information on pediatric admissions in 38 states, were used to identify military and nonmilitary dependents.
- Mental health diagnoses per 1,000 hospitalizations and mechanisms of injury per 1,000 injury-related hospitalizations were reported.
- All patients in the study were non-needs based insurers.

## PARTICIPANTS

- The sample included 1,660 female service members who gave birth between 2001 and 2008.
- The majority of participants were White and born between 1970-1979.
- Most female service members who deployed both prior to and after childbirth were enlisted Army or Air Force members.

## LIMITATIONS

- This study did not include information on the branch of service. Hence, the findings may not generalize to all Service members.
- The way the data were weighted (national versus state level) may have biased the findings in an unknown direction.
- Given the parameters of the dataset, researchers were unable to calculate population-level rates; therefore, the possibility that some differences were influenced by competing causes of injury is increased.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Explore the effect of demographic (e.g., rank, branch, component) and deployment (e.g., frequency, number, length, stage of deployment cycle) factors on military dependent hospitalization
- Examine the effectiveness of health prevention strategies aimed at military families
- Utilize randomized trials designed to identify effective, culturally sensitive interventions for public safety could be funded to determine the most appropriate programs for military families

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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