



Supporting
Military Families
Through Research
and Outreach

PUTTING RESEARCH TO WORK FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

Web-based Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Education for Military Family Members

Roy, M. J., Taylor, P., Runge W., Grigsby, E., Woolley, M. & Torgeson, T. (2012). Web-based post-traumatic stress disorder education for military family members. *Military Medicine*, 177(3), 284-290.



An educational website about post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was created for military family members in order to increase PTSD-related knowledge and promote actions to help Service members with their symptoms. The findings indicate that use of the website improved military family members' PTSD-related knowledge, and for some participants, stimulated discussion with the Service member about their symptoms or about seeking mental health care.

Key Findings:

- Military family members' PTSD-related knowledge increased after accessing this educational website.
- The degree of improvement on the PTSD knowledge questionnaire was greatest among participants with less prior academic education.
- More than half of participants who visited the website a second time reported discussing symptoms with and/or persuading the Service member to seek medical or mental health services for their symptoms.

Implications for Programs:

- Programs working with military Service members after deployment may wish to consider increasing efforts to educate family members about PTSD and related symptoms.
- Programs working with military Service members and their families after deployment may wish to consider web-based resources to enhance education while monitoring concerns about confidentiality.

Implications for Policies:

- Policies regarding post-deployment mental health could continue to increase family education and involvement when possible.
- Funding could be provided for continued evaluation of web-based education for family members in order to maximize treatment-seeking among military Service members experiencing symptoms of PTSD and related disorders.

Avenues for Future Research:

- Additional studies including different military branches would increase generalizability to other Service members.
- Future research comparing the benefit of accessing this website relative to other pre-existing PTSD-related websites (e.g., the National Center for PTSD website) may be useful in determining the utility of the website.

Prepared by the Military REACH Team.

For additional information, please visit reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu

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Background Information

Methodology:

- A 3-phase study that included the following: 1) focus groups with military family members aimed at development of an educational website to improve family members' knowledge of PTSD; 2) a pilot study to test the initial version of the website and a 25-item PTSD Knowledge Questionnaire; and 3) the primary study to evaluate change in PTSD-related knowledge and self-reported behavioral changes in family members using the site.
- Participants were recruited through Family Readiness Groups and Family Advocacy Programs.
- Primary analyses focused on comparison of PTSD Knowledge Questionnaire scores before and after accessing the website.

Participants:

- Focus Groups: Military family members (primarily spouses; 2 teenage children) from 3 sites across the country. No additional focus group demographics were provided.
- Pilot study: 101 website users were included in analyses
- Primary study: 497 website users were included in analyses; 217 of the original 497 completed a return visit to the website.
- Over three-quarters of the website users were females who identified themselves as a Service member's spouse. The average age of participants was 30 years. Approximately three-quarters of participants identified themselves as White and nearly all had completed high school or college.
- Website users primarily reported on male military service members who were Active duty Army personnel. About half were enlisted.

Limitations:

- Results cannot be generalized to general military or Veteran populations because most respondents reported on males who were Active duty in the Army.
- Although a substantial number of fraudulent website users attempting to obtain compensation were detected and excluded, concerns about the validity of the included participants remain.
- Focus group participants expressed concerns about confidentiality and adverse effects of accessing the website on the career of the Service members. These same concerns may have influenced participants in the pilot and primary study to respond in socially desirable ways.

Assessing Research that Works

Research Design and Sample				Quality Rating:	
	Excellent (★★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★)	Questionable (★)	
The design of the study (e.g., research plan, sample, recruitment) used to address the research question was...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Research Methods				Quality Rating:	
	Excellent (★★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★)	Questionable (★)	
The research methods (e.g., measurement, analysis) used to answer the research question were...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Limitations				Quality Rating:	
	Excellent Minor Limitations (★★★★)	Appropriate Few Limitations (★★★)	Limited Several Limitations (★★)	Questionable Many/Severe Limitations (★)	
The limitations of this study are...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Implications				Quality Rating:	N/A
	Excellent (★★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★)	Questionable (★)	
The implications of this research to programs, policies and the field, stated by the authors, are...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable because authors do not discuss implications					
				Overall Quality Rating	