Disaster First Responder Training: A Train-the-Trainer Veterans Program to Combat PTSD

Dr. Jenevieve Kincaid1, Dr. Elaine Reno2, Dr. Jay Lemery3, Dr. Todd Miner4

1. Reno School of Medicine, University of Nevada, Reno, United States
2. School of Medicine, University of Colorado, Aurora, United States

Introduction: There are many health challenges faced by those returning from military service. Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a serious problem in veterans. PTSD is a risk factor for suicide in veterans. Standard treatments include medication and talk therapy. Non-traditional treatments include civil service and leadership training.

Aim: Assess the effectiveness of Veteran Focused Train-the-Trainer (TTT) Community Disaster Response and First Aid (DRAFA) Programs in promoting health, wellness, reintegration, and decreasing PTSD symptoms of veterans.

Methods: A longitudinal cohort study was conducted using a convenience sample of veterans living in Denver, Colorado or Reno, Nevada. The sample size was over 50 (N=50+), with 25+ case-matched veterans at each location. This is an ongoing project lasting through the end of 2020. Inclusion criteria selected veterans interested in DRAFA training and education. Exclusion criteria disqualified those who are not a veteran or those unable to perform physical tasks required by curriculum. The null hypothesis was that there is no relationship between the DRAFA TTT program and the health, well-being, and reintegration of veterans back into their communities. Statistical tools used were SPSS Statistics (Version 25) and NVivo 12-12.2.0.3262. Research activities were conducted under the auspices of the University of Colorado and guided by the principles of the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Results: Results are being evaluated using a mixed methods impact model. The main outcomes measured health, wellness, and reintegration using Veterans RAND-12 Health Quality of Life Survey, the Military to Civilian Reintegration Survey, and a satisfaction survey. Preliminary analysis may indicate a correlation between participation in the DRAFA TTT program and improved health/wellness outcomes, better reintegration into society, and decreased PTSD.

Discussion: There is growing evidence that expedited structured reintegration programs in community preparedness and disaster leadership roles for veterans alleviate PTSD symptoms and improves quality of life.