

Rural Women Veterans' Use and Perception of Mental Health Services

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Presenter Disclosures

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The following personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to this presentation existed during the past 12 months:

No Relationships to Disclose

Women Veterans



SHE SERVED

SO THAT WE COULD LIVE FREE

Purpose

- Examine barriers to mental health care for rural women veterans
- Provide descriptive data on a group of ten women veterans' use and perception of mental health services in rural Oregon

Methods

- Participants
- Procedures
- Human Subjects

Interview Questions

- Use of services
- Perception of services
- Awareness of local services
- Demographic data

Findings

- Precipitating Event
- Supportive Peer
- Cultural Barriers to Care
 - Gender discrimination
 - Lack of caring
 - Stigma

Precipitating Event

- Some particular event or set of circumstances that precipitated seeking help in mental health.
- “Having a meltdown” which initiated use of services. “I didn’t know what was wrong with me but I was having a hard time keeping it together.”
- This event or series of events consisted of chronic sexual and gender harassment, or war zone trauma. This eventually led to their own “meltdown”.

Supportive Peer

- *It wasn't like you had any friends but a couple of the women I worked with in the unit said that I needed to go see someone, that they were worried about me. If it hadn't been for someone noticing that I wasn't acting normally, I probably never would have gone in.*

Cultural Barriers to Care

- Gender discrimination

Yeah, it was definitely harder being a woman. You had to work harder than the guys and then you still got all this grief; constantly being told you were pathetic and women didn't belong in the military.

Cultural Barriers to Care

- Lack of Caring
- *I didn't think they cared at all. They were just doing their job and never asked me about what the issue was. It was ok, but not what I needed. I felt like they just wanted to give me medications. I was numb on medications. I finally just quit going, quit the medications. It didn't seem to make any difference anyway.*

Cultural Barriers to Care

- Stigma
- *No one in their right mind would go to get care! You were a marked target once you did. They just looked at you like you were weak. I went and got counseling which did help a little. I sure paid a price for going. I felt like it was going to be the same thing in the VA so I never checked things out.*

Local Services



Findings

- Demographic data
 - Army veterans
 - Age
 - Deployments
 - Service-connected disabilities
 - Mental Health related

Discussion

- Use of mental health services
- Perceptions of care
- Service-connected disabilities

Implications

- Women Veterans
- Healthcare providers
- Communities

Thank you

- Women veterans
- Jonas Center for Nursing and Veterans Healthcare



Questions

- ????

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