

## Research Paper

### Outline

- I. Introduction: physical, emotional, mental and social characteristics of military personnel group;
- II. Main discussion:
  - A. Main health problems;
  - B. Description of health problems and their major causes;
  - C. Health prevention strategies based on a theory;
- III. Conclusion

## **Military Personnel**

In the second half of the twentieth century, the American military faced the crisis of a profession due to the continuous technological change. Nowadays, the trend remained the same. The existing situation could be explained by the idea that the professional soldiers strive to adjust to a constantly changing environment. Due to these accommodations, the military personnel differ substantially from the civil society in terms of their worldview. However, there is no unanimous opinion concerning the specific aspects distinguishing soldiers from the rest of community.

While analyzing the demographic situation of the American military, it should be stressed that it did not origin from the urban poor layers because there is a large percentage of soldiers coming from the elite social class. The evidence suggests that the average annual income of military recruits equals to about \$ 43,000, whereas household income ranges between \$ 35,000- \$ 80,000 (Lowther, n. d.). Interestingly, the number of military personnel with high-income level has been increased since the 9/11 events, whereas the number of low income recruits declined. As per education, the percentage of people with degrees in high education among military members is much higher than among the civil population. Overall, it can be concluded that the average members of the military service "...would be a white high school graduate from a middle class family in the suburbs and exurbs somewhere in the South or West" (Lowther, n. d., p. 4). Demographic characteristics are closely connected with mental, physical, and emotional characteristics of armed forces due to the three reasons that relate to educational benefits, adventure, and training. In this respect, it is logical to conclude that members of the U.S. armed forces are courageous, ambitious individuals who are ready to undertake risks. Hardiness is

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another essential feature of military staff that plays a critical role in defining individual's will to face difficulties and overcome those.

Analysis of soldiers closely relates to military leadership psychology that implies that this category includes leaders or followers who face an obstacle as something that should definitely be surpassed (Lowther, n. d.). As per emotional analysis, it should be stressed that the military personnel tend to be less emotional and more task-oriented. Objectivity of judgment is a priority for them. Apart from common psychological features, military personnel also have similar health care problems. Specific attention requires high frequency of posttraumatic stress disorders among both military combats and non-combats. In particular, Peterson et al. (2010) refer to the symptoms of the disorder as the ones caused by the military events in Afghanistan and Iraq.

### **MAIN DISCUSSION**

#### **Main Health Problems**

According to the report presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2012), both retired military personnel and the active soldiers suffer from physical and psychological problems. Hence, it has been found that veterans are more likely to having chronic diseases as compared to the active military officers. Serious psychological disorders are also more peculiar to groups aged 45-54 whose health conditions are much poorer as compared to individuals under the age of 25-34 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012). The most common chronic diseases among the professional soldiers, as well as among the retired military, involve diabetes, high blood pressure, hypertension, heart distress, asthma, and kidney disease. Serious psychological distress and mental disorder are associated with depression and anxiety disorders. The researchers have also reported, "the

effects of military service on physical and psychological health, especially after extended overseas deployments, are complex” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012). It has also been discovered that more than 12 million men falling under a 25-64 category represent the retired military personnel and count for 15 % of the U.S population.

### **Description of Health Problems and Its Major Causes**

All the above-described health problems, including high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes are among the most serious illnesses in the United States and abroad. In particular, diabetes constitutes serious threat to senior individuals because it is the core reason for non-traumatic lower-limb amputations, blindness, and kidney disease. Moreover, diabetes is also closely associated with heart stroke and disorder. Being among the leading reasons of death among the U.S. population, diabetes should be taken into deepest consideration by health care professionals (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012). This is of particular concern to the military personnel that contain high rates of individuals suffering from this disease. High blood pressure and hypertension closely relate to the stresses and psychological traumas that professional soldiers experience during military operations. Diabetes can also be caused by inappropriate living conditions under which the military staff operates in wartime.

### **Health Intervention Strategy based on Health Belief Model**

Applying Health Belief Model in health intervention strategies for the Military personnel is beneficial because it prioritizes the importance of patient’s perception and awareness in treating a specific disorder. In this respect, health care professionals should pay closer attention to demographic variables including age, ethnicity, occupation, and gender, socio-psychological variables, health motivation,

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and perceived threats and awareness. All these mediating factors can contribute to the effectiveness of the integrated treatment program. With regard to the target group of the participants, the strategies will be split into several steps. To begin with, the new intervention program will specifically rely on the military personnel background in treating hypertension and high blood pressure, particularly on the nature of the identified disorder. Because the major cause of high blood pressure is psychological stress and pressure of wartime, patients should undergo psychological testing to define what situations and events enhance their feelings and negative experiences to prevent these situations in future. Such a testing procedure can also help the patients develop the coping mechanisms to resist the psychological pressure. The defense mechanisms, based on the patients' level of perception of the disease, can minimize the risk of high blood pressure.

The main premises of Health Belief Model allow health care professionals to modify the psychological states of individuals causing both mental and physical disorders. Apart from internal behaviors, the role of psychological procedures also lies in detecting the external factors that negatively influence the physical state of the military representatives. Assessment of external and internal factors can also contribute to the patient's reevaluation and measurement of self-efficacy. Finally, the theoretical framework introduced for the intervention strategy creates motivation for patients. It is very important for health professionals to make individual identify major incentives for full recovery. Therefore, medical specialists should encourage patients to connect their disorder with their life experiences to understand external factors influencing their physical and emotional state. The main advantage of this model lies in the individual-centered approach to treatment.

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