



Mental Health Issues Among Deployed Personnel: Longitudinal Assessment of the Resilience of Transitioning Military Personnel

Background

Every year, 200,000 troops return home from combat assignments, depart from military service, and rejoin their families and civilian communities (Brothers, 2006). Given the potential trauma these personnel may have experienced, many of them will develop progressive onset of combat-related psychological symptoms. Indeed, many individuals may not develop combat-related symptoms until after their discharge from service. Unfortunately, almost no prospective research has been conducted on the readjustment process and the factors that influence mental health resilience for the sizeable current wave of troops-in-transition.

Study Aims

This study is designed to characterize the direct impact of combat exposure on mental health outcomes among Marines and Sailors in transition from active duty to civilian life and to examine the interrelationships between combat exposure, a variety of moderators, and subsequent psychological resilience, mental health symptoms, and substance abuse. RTI International, together with the Naval Health Research Center, will examine a number of specific hypotheses regarding the effects of individual risk and protective factors on mental health outcomes.

Specifically, we plan to

- determine the prevalence of deployment-related psychological symptoms in troops-in-transition who are returning to civilian life,
- use a variety of data sources to identify risk and protective factors for mental health symptoms and mental health resilience,
- incorporate the identified risk and resilience factors into a comprehensive longitudinal model extending 6 months after separation from military service,
- determine the extent of underreporting of mental health problems on the official Post-Deployment Health Readjustment Assessment (PDHRA)
- make recommendations for interventions to improve mental health surveillance in military personnel and to enhance the well-being of military combatants.



(continued)



Mental Health Issues Among Deployed Personnel: Longitudinal Assessment of the Resilience of Transitioning Military Personnel *(continued)*



Study Design

A baseline survey will be administered to active-duty Sailors and Marines in the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) during routine mandated separation counseling. A subgroup of respondents with high combat exposure will be tracked over time for the longitudinal portion of the study. The subsequent mental well-being of this high-risk cohort will be assessed through a follow-on survey 6 months after the participants have transitioned to civilian life. Data from extant historical personnel and medical data will also be combined with survey data to develop models that demonstrate the influence of combat, and a variety of covariates, on mental health symptoms, resilience, and substance abuse.

For more information, go to <https://transition.rti.org/> or contact

PI: Laurel Hourani, Ph.D., M.P.H.
RTI International
Behavioral Health & Criminal Justice Research Division
3040 Cornwallis Drive
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709

Co-PI: Jerry Larson, Ph.D.
Co-Investigator: Jeffery Matloff, Ph.D.
Naval Health Research Center/VA San Diego
P.O. Box 85122
San Diego, CA 92186

RTI-5338 07/2007



RTI International is one of the world's leading research institutes, dedicated to improving the human condition by turning knowledge into practice. With projects in more than 40 countries and a staff of more than 2,600, RTI offers innovative research and technical solutions to governments and businesses worldwide in the areas of health and pharmaceuticals, education and training, surveys and statistics, advanced technology, democratic governance, economic and social development, energy, and the environment. RTI maintains seven offices in the U.S., six international offices, two international subsidiaries, and project offices around the world. For more information, visit www.rti.org.

RTI International is a trade name of Research Triangle Institute.