LGBT Active Military/Veterans and Suicide Risk

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A literature review revealed a “paucity of research” about suicide risk among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) military personnel and veterans. The authors suggest that more research in this area is needed given the elevated risk of suicidal behaviors among the general LGBT population as well as recent evidence that the rate of suicidal behaviors is increasing among military and veteran populations in general.

Studies of LGBT people in general have revealed much higher rates of suicide attempts and suicidal ideation than among heterosexuals. The authors report that “it cannot be determined unequivocally that death by suicide is higher among the LGBT community” because information on sexual orientation is not included on death certificates. Only two articles on LGB veterans and suicidal behaviors were identified. Both concluded that lesbian, gay, and bisexual veterans had higher rates of suicidal ideation and attempts than heterosexual veterans. No research on transgender veterans was found. The research identified “two risk factors that appear to be particularly relevant to suicide risk in the LGBT population [in general]: victimization and decreased social support.” Other studies have described the presence of both risk factors in the lives of LGBT active military personnel and veterans. The authors suggest that more research is needed on the extent of suicide and suicidal behaviors among LGBT active military personnel and veterans, the unique risk and protective factors that may come into play in this population, and how well the research on suicidal behavior in LGBT people in general applies to LGBT active military personnel and veterans.
