New Study Reports on Suicidal Thinking Among U.S. Veterans

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Science Daily [1]

Almost 14 percent of veterans participating in the National Health and Resilience in Veterans Study led by the VA’s National Center for PTSD reported having suicidal ideation during one or both stages of the two-year study. This figure is consistent with several other studies showing that suicidal thoughts occur in a higher percentage of veterans than in the general population. The two waves of the study were conducted in 2011 and 2013; each time, the veterans were asked whether they had experienced suicidal thoughts in the past two weeks. The two-stage study format revealed that some veterans had chronic suicidal ideation and others had it at just one of the points during the two-year study. "Our results ... highlight the dynamic nature of [suicidal ideation]," said the researchers, "as evidenced by the meaningful proportion of U.S. veterans reporting changes in suicidal ideation over time." This finding demonstrated the importance of ongoing periodic screening rather than just a single screening. Another key result was that 65 percent of veterans with suicidal thinking only at wave 2 had never received mental health treatment, which indicated a need for more outreach. It was also found that social connectedness was associated with remission of suicidal thinking. However, for many of the veterans with chronic ideation, social support did not have much effect. For these veterans, researchers suggested that treating psychiatric, physical health, and substance use problems may be more important.

Spark Extra! For more information on this study, look at the article abstract [2].

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