

Perceptions of Psychiatric Services Held by African-American Male Veterans

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Branches of Armed Forces

- **Air Force** – A branch of the armed forces primarily responsible for air warfare. Commonly known as Airmen.
- **Army** – A branch of the armed forces primarily responsible for land warfare. Commonly known as Soldiers.
- **Marine Corps** – An amphibious branch of the armed forces primarily responsible for land and sea warfare. Commonly known as Marines.
- **Navy** – A branch of the armed forces primarily responsible for sea warfare. Commonly known as Sailors.
- **Coast Guard** – A branch of the armed forces under the Department of Homeland Security. Primarily concerned with law enforcement, boating safety, sea rescue and illegal immigration control.

Did You Know?

- In 2010, the proportion of male veterans is an estimated 90% compared to 10% female, which means that male veterans are highly represented in the Veterans Administration (VA) Healthcare System.
- As of 2007, the proportion of African-American veteran males was 10% compared to European-American male veterans of 81%, and 9% for the combined group of other minority male veterans.
- Of 492,735 current active-duty minority members, 10.3% are officers compared to 89.7% who are enlisted, and the latter group is more susceptible to sustaining physical and/or mental injuries during combat.
- It has been found that African-American veterans experience a greater rate of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) than European-American veterans.
- Differences in PTSD rates are attributed to greater exposure of African Americans to war zone trauma compared to Caucasian counterparts, which increases risk not only for PTSD but also for many other health-related and psychosocial adversities.
- When treated by either African-American or European-American clinicians, African-American veterans had poorer attendance in PTSD treatment, seemed less committed to treatment, were less likely to be prescribed antidepressant medications, and showed less improvement in control of violent behavior than Caucasian veterans.



(continued)

- Compared to Caucasian veterans with depression, African-American veterans were less likely to receive medication treatment and combined therapy treatment, which the latter has been shown to be most effective among the depression treatments.

Socio=Cultural=Barriers

- African-American veterans are less likely to be involved in treatment activities that emphasize personal exploration (discussion of war trauma and insight-oriented psychotherapy) than their European-American counterparts.
- African-American male veterans are less likely to share personal vulnerabilities given the psychosocial history of betrayal in the lives of African-American men.
- Many African-American veterans perceived that their providers did not show the same respect to them as they would with European-American veterans.
- Therapists' reluctance to address spiritual issues may contribute to negative mental health outcomes for African-American veterans.



System=Level=Barriers

- Lack of familiarity with how to access VA services or in addressing service-connection issues for eligibility.
- Inconvenient VA clinic hours and distant service locations.
- Lack of outreach or follow-up services to re-engage African-American veterans with VA mental health services.
- VA atmosphere perceived as being too stressful.
- Unfavorable opinions about mental health services at the VA may influence veterans that have dual health care coverage to use their non-VA insurance benefits.

Future=Recommendations

- Provide more pre-injury education to veterans in theater or near retirement on how to access the VA health care system and about service-connection issues.
- Formulate outreach teams comprised of veterans to follow-up and connect with veterans who no longer or never accessed VA mental health services.

- Increase efforts to hire and train additional minority mental health practitioners in VA health care systems.
- Collaborate with veterans' advocacy groups to monitor policy and provider behaviors related to cultural competency.

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