



Integral Collaborative Work Across Public and Private Sectors: Combining Conventional and Complementary and Alternative Medicine for Suicide Prevention and Management.

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Objectives

1. Identify critical information available to the Department of Defense and critically needed by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in order to identify suicide behavior risks.
2. Describe strategies for continued treatment of mental health needs and crises management of transitioning service members.
3. Discuss TCM and how the combination of conventional medicine and complementary and alternative medicine offers a holistic, more effective approach to mental health care.
4. Identify creative ways for community identification of industry partners, advocates, and interagency collaboration related to suicide reduction and mental health needs.

VA Whole Health/Circle of Health

- The Whole Health approach empowers the patient to take charge of their own health and well-being, while integrating self-care, professional and community care.
- The Whole Health Pathway includes Veteran peer whole health groups, well-being programs (yoga, tai chi, mindfulness), and integrative health care.
- Mind-body approaches (biofeedback, meditation, journaling, etc.) can help improve mental health conditions, such as PTSD, anxiety, and depression.
- Studies show combining multiple complementary and traditional therapies lead to better overall health and well-being.

Discoveries

- In 2008, the U. S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) identified critical gaps in the DOD's ability to share healthcare record information of transitioning service members effectively and comprehensively with the VA, especially information regarding service member's mental health status.
- In a pivotal 2019 Congressional hearing, the DOD and VA reported the need for collaboration and embraced community-based, public health prevention efforts. The goal being strengthening the need for transitioning to a global vision of mental health care versus a fragmented model, and supporting continuity of care between the DOD, VA, and community partnerships.
- The 2019 VA National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report estimates Veterans in the United States (US) accounted for 13.5% of all deaths by suicide; a 6.1% increase in the number of suicide deaths in the Veteran population between 2005 and 2017.
- The RAND Corporation reported among all active-duty members of the US Armed Forces, the suicide rate increased from 16.3 per 100,000 to over 20 per 100,000 between 2008 and 2016.
- The use of traditional and complimentary systems of medicine (TCM) are utilized by the DOD while the VA has adopted a Whole Health model that focuses on Patient-centered care and integrative health modalities.

Conclusion

- Improving and expanding a collaborative voice strengthens federal medicine's impact in advancing and improving mental health.
- Synchronizing current transitional care modalities-- ensuring care continuance and positive health outcomes.
- Improving interagency data/record sharing for transitional mental healthcare ensuring continuance of care.
- Actively engage community, academic and civic partners to advocate and effect policy change.

Implications

- Future research studies that focus on the efficacy of TCM and of CIH.
- Identify efficacy studies with program outcomes suitable for unique needs.
- Explore studies focusing on "big interagency data" sharing identifying hindrances and exemplars of improvements.
- Training and development of advanced practice nurses and multidisciplinary team members for mental health topics.
- Exposure of health care professional students to holistic mental health concepts—acute, chronic and transitional care continuum.

