

Alabama School for Alcohol and Other Drug Studies

Presents

***The Battle at Home: Exploring the Complexities of PTSD,
Substance Abuse, and Other Cooccurring Conditions
in the Veteran Population***

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Presented by

*Rev. Thurston Smith, MPA, LAC/S, CCS, CAADAC
Associate Professor of Sociology, Graceland University
Email: tssmith@graceland.edu*

Biographical Highlights

Associate Professor of Psychology and Sociology, Graceland University

Associate Minister, New Salem Missionary Baptist Church

Executive Career Field retiree, U.S. Veterans Health Administration

Community Organizer

CARF International, Administrative & Program Surveyor

National Trainer in Behavioral Health and Organizational Leadership

Member, NAADAC Public Policy Committee

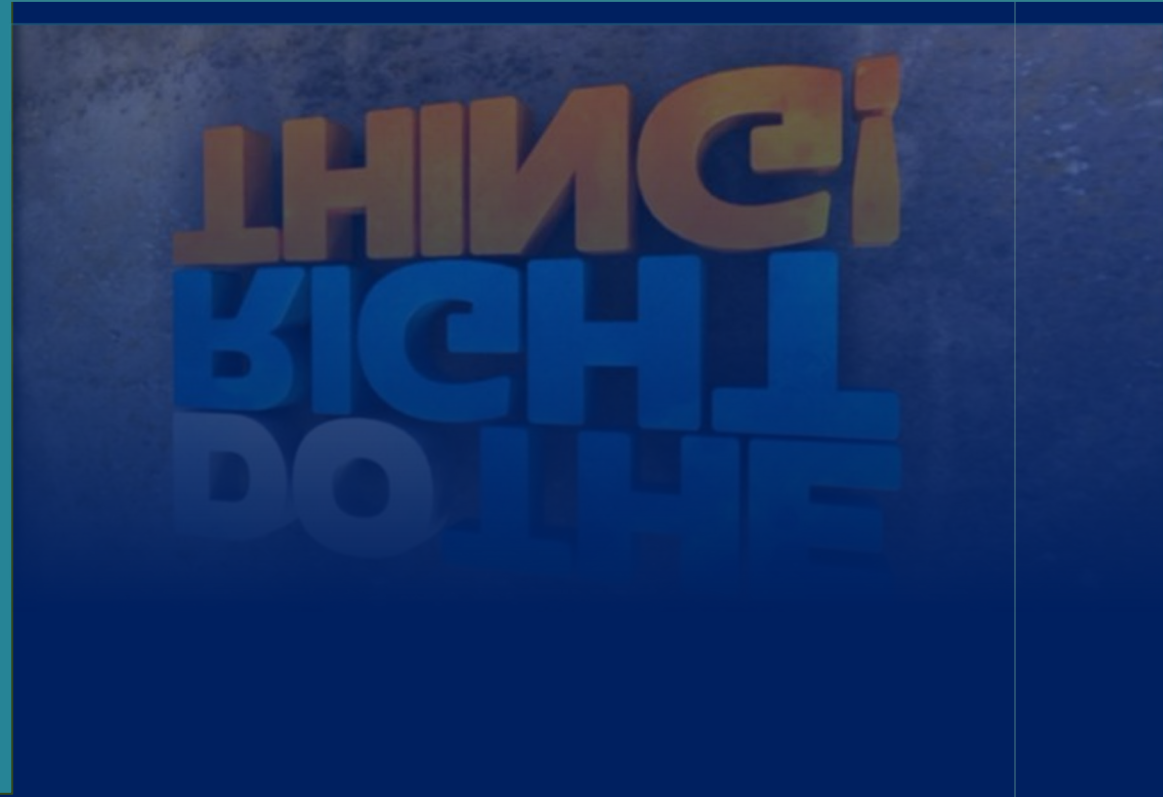
Project Team Member, Paramount Consulting Group, PLLC



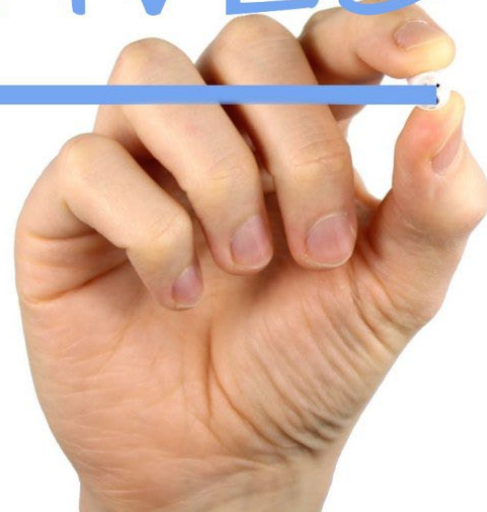


Disclosure and Conflicts of Interest

The presenter has no actual or potential conflicts of interest in relation to this program, the Alabama School for Alcohol and Other Drug Studies, the University of Alabama, State of Alabama, or this presentation.



OBJECTIVES



Participants will...

Discuss

Discuss the prevalence of cooccurring disorders among veterans and its impact on interpersonal functioning

Analyze

Analyze the complicated nature of behavioral healthcare practice with veterans

Examine and demonstrate

Examine and demonstrate the application of evidence-based approaches in treating and responding to veterans with complex cooccurring conditions



Overview

While the list of individuals and groups receiving mental healthcare in the United States is both broad and diverse, veterans remain amongst the most unique and complex of all special populations.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), serious mental illness (SMI), major depressive episode (MDE), and substance use disorder (SUD), are on the rise in this population, and in 2020 alone, 5.2 million Veterans experienced a behavioral health condition (2022).





Veteran

"A person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable."

- U.S. Code Title 38



Caring for Veterans

"Military service members, their families, and veterans have unique needs that require a culturally competent approach to services and treatment."

- SAMHSA



Thoughts About Military & Veterans' Culture



"Understanding military culture is further complicated by the fact that service members also occupy other cultures that need to be considered in the delivery of health care."

- Ross, et al.

Culture is something that
unites people.

— ANASTASIYA O., RUSSIA



Veterans' & Military Culture



Stratified society

Sense of entitlement

Unique social group all of its own

Has its own set of rules and norms

Has its own language ("even alphabet")

Strong work ethic and orientation toward teams



Veterans' & Military Culture

Devout commitment and affinity to military culture

Sense of pride ("may have difficulty asking for help")

Accustomed to a set of beliefs, traditions, and values

Jovial competition across branches of military service

Strong tendency towards masculinity ("among males")

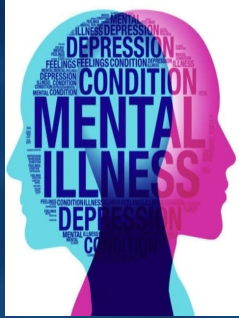
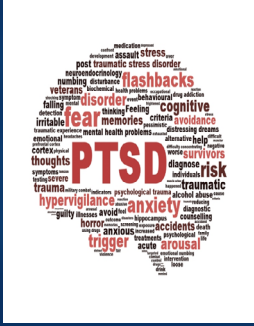
Propensity towards moral injury and survivor's guilt ("war" and "trauma" related)

May have challenges relating to readjustment (due to multiple deployments and relocations)

Challenges due to alienation from primary support system



Veterans and Cooccurring Conditions



"As more active-duty service members see combat situations, more are at risk for developing cooccurring disorders, about 11 to 20% of service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan struggle with both PTSD and depression, and about half have been treated for symptoms of mental illness – 30% of those Veterans report PTSD specifically."

- Laura Close, American Addiction Centers

2019 Veterans' Cooccurring & Substance Use Disorder Statistics



3.1 million Veterans were diagnosed with a mental illness

1.3 million Veterans were diagnosed with a substance use disorder (SUD)

27.4% of Veterans received no treatment for serious mental illness (SMI)

481,000 Veterans were diagnosed with substance use disorder (SUD) and mental illness

Four (4) out of five (5) Veterans struggled with an alcohol problem ("1 million")

One (1) out of four (4) Veterans have a serious mental illness ("3.9 million")

27% of soldiers report facing dilemmas in which they were unsure of how to respond ("Moral Injury")

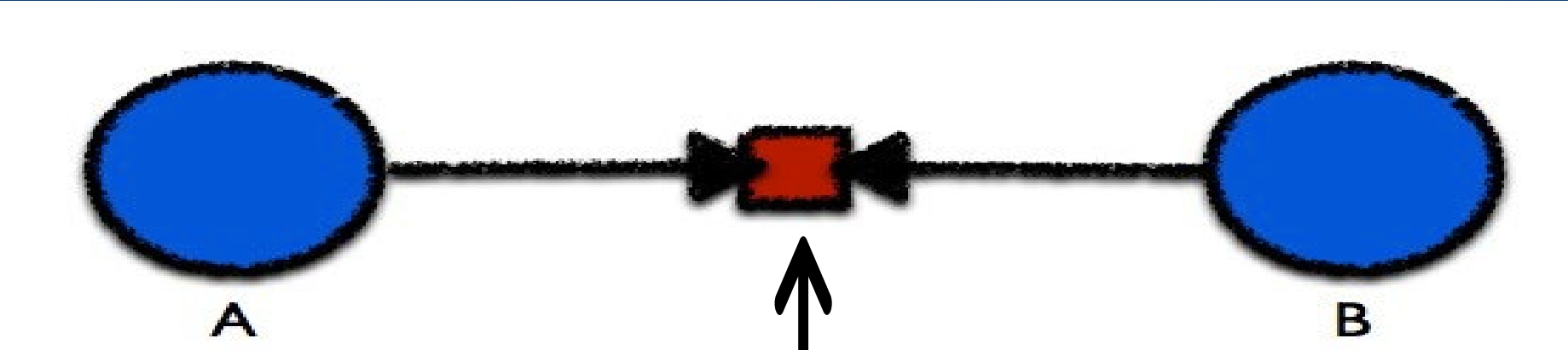
One (1) out of thirteen (13) Veterans struggled with alcohol and other drug abuse ("98,000")

3.9 million Veterans were diagnosed with a mental illness and/or substance use disorder (SUD)

595,000 Veterans diagnosed with opiate use disorder (OUD) – hydrocodone, oxycodone, heroin, fentanyl



Correlations Between Posttraumatic Stress and Substance Use Disorders



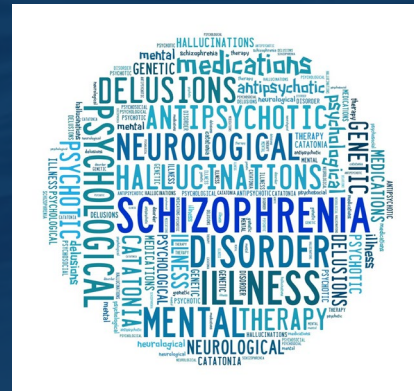
Its Complexities May Be Somewhere in the Middle

Prevalence of PTSD & SUD

- 46.4% of vets diagnosed with PTSD also met diagnostic criteria for SUD
- 27.9% of women and 51.9% of men with lifetime PTSD also met criteria for SUD
- Women with PTSD 2.48 times more likely to meet criteria for alcohol abuse or dependence than women without PTSD
- Women with PTSD 4.46 times more likely to meet criteria for drug abuse or dependence than women without PTSD
- Men with PTSD were 2.06 times more likely to meet criteria for alcohol abuse or dependence than men without PTSD
- Men with PTSD were 2.97 times more likely to meet criteria for drug abuse or dependence than men without PTSD
- A significant number of Veterans with PTSD have met criteria for comorbid substance use
- 74% of Vietnam Veterans with PTSD had comorbid SUD



Treatment Implications for Veterans With Cooccurring Disorders





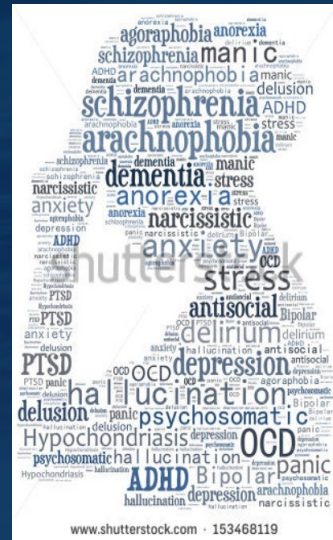
Moral Injury

"Moral injury is the social, psychological and spiritual suffering stemming from costly or unworkable attempts to manage, control, or cope with the experience of moral pain and the vast majority of Veterans struggling with moral injury related issues receive treatment for PTSD."

***- Lauren M. Borges, Ph.D.
Clinical Research Psychologist***

Complicated and Common Conditions Among Veterans:

- ***Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)*** – problems with cognition, communication, and severe medical issues
- ***Major Depressive Disorder (MDD)*** – depressed mood, hypersomnia/insomnia, fatigue, suicidal thoughts
- ***PTSD*** – nightmares, flashbacks, emotional distress, trauma-related feelings, thoughts, and memories
- ***SUD*** – ongoing abuse of alcohol, opioids, cocaine, opiates, methamphetamines, and cannabis
- ***Bipolar Disorder (BPD)*** – racing thoughts, extreme mood swings, sleeplessness, depressed mood
- ***Schizophrenia*** – delusions, disorganized speech, hallucinations, catatonic behavior
- ***Anxiety Disorder*** – restlessness, fatigue, irritability, poor concentration
- ***Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)*** – unstable interpersonal relationships, impulsivity, and propensity for self-harm (more common among females)
- ***Homelessness*** – high percentage of homeless Veterans have cooccurring mental health conditions





Common Treatment Approaches



bio



psycho



social



Common Treatment Approaches for Veterans With Cooccurring Disorders

Acceptance Commitment Therapy (ACT)

- action-oriented, strength-based psychotherapy model used among Vets with trauma-related disorders

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

- challenges methods of reasoning to improve interpersonal functioning/decision making – used commonly among Vets with depression and SUD

Cognitive Processing Therapy/Prolonged Exposure (CPT/PE)

- cognitive behavioral approach broadly used for Vets with moral injury and trauma-related disorders (commonly delivered in 12-sessions)

Contingency Management (CM)

- behavioral therapy based on operant conditioning, used frequently with VA SUD and homeless Veterans

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

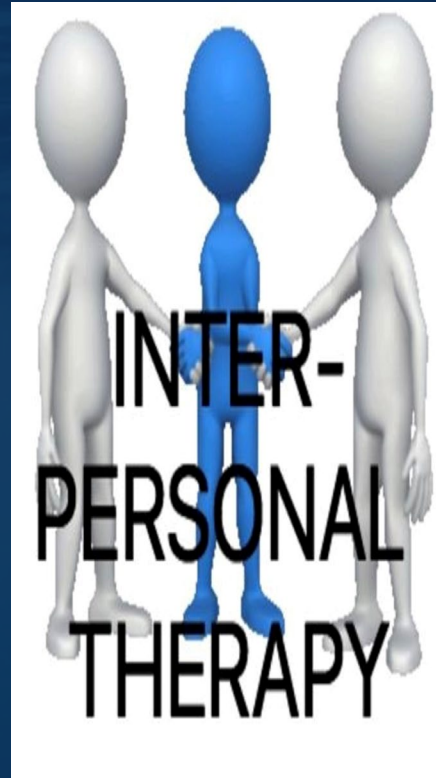
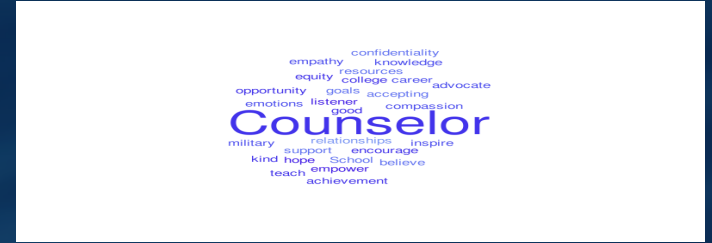
- Integrated individual, group, and psychoeducational training model for Vets experiencing one or more mental health conditions

Motivational Interviewing

- strength-based counseling approach used frequently with SUD patients and persons with other medical conditions

Psychopharmacotherapy

- medicinal treatments for Vets experiencing a variety of cooccurring conditions, including SUD



Final Thoughts...

"Providing treatment services that are thoughtfully centered on the needs and expectations of our patients is an essential attribute of quality healthcare delivery; yet, even our Veterans deserve so much more."



Know Your Client



Questions???



Resources



Brain Line (“YouTube Video”)

Phone: 1-703-998-2020

Website: [Cognitive Processing Therapy for Vets With PTSD](#)

Mental Health.gov

Phone: 1-800-342-9647

Website: [Help For Service Members and Families](#)

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse & Alcoholism (NIAAA)

Phone: 1-301-443-3860

Website: [Motivational Enhancement Therapy Manual](#)

National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Phone: 1-319-467-4278

Website: [Contingency Management: A Veterans Health Administration Initiative](#)



Resources

SAMHSA

Phone: 1-877-726-4727

Website: [TIP 42: SUD Treatment for Persons With Cooccurring Disorders](#)

Website: [National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Veteran Adults](#)

Uniformed Services University

Phone: 1-301-400-4300

Website: [Military Course Culture Modules](#)

U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs

Phone: 1-802-296-6300

Website: [Treating Vets With PTSD](#)

Website: [Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Chronic Pain With Vets](#)

Website: [Contingency Management with Veterans](#)

Website: [Uniformed Mental Health Services Handbook](#)



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