

Samantha Kesser

Daughter of Douglas and Erika Keeser

Butler University and majoring in English and Spanish with an eye towards law school

Issues Veterans Face Today

"All of the sudden, you have no control over it," an unnamed veteran attempts to describe the feeling of PTSD, stating that even the simplest incident, such as a foam dart from a NERF gun, can set off an attack ("What Does PTSD Feel Like?"). The memories from war, tarnish, and terror filling the minds of thousands of veterans.

However, there seems to be a lack of awareness that the general public has surrounding the mental illness. People understand the definition, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, but society has little of an idea as to the real ways this disease can affect veterans. The lack of general awareness can cause the veterans to shy away from getting help. Thirty percent of Vietnam veterans, Twelve percent of Gulf War veterans, and twenty percent of Gulf War veterans have reported suffering from PTSD as a result of combat or war events, which calls for awareness and reform in regards to the mental health of veterans ("How Common is PTSD in Veterans?").

Not only do services such as inpatient and outpatient programs, and counseling need to be available for veterans to access, but the general population need to be more aware of the signs and potential treatments for PTSD, in the event that someone they know is afflicted with the disease.

The conversation surrounding mental health in society has become a hot topic through the past few years, with many celebrities and athletes speaking out against the stigma that surrounds mental illness, but veterans and their relationship with mental illness is often ignored, People believe that because the veterans have such experiences, they must be strong enough to handle not only the battles of war, but also the battles in their minds. People often forget that their close relatives, grandparents, parents, and even siblings can be suffering in silence with PTSD and other related mental health issues, such as depression, because of the choice they made to sacrifice their lives for their country.

Veterans do not deserve to be treated in such a way that their health concerns are ignored by the general public. The fact that these men and women gave everything they had in order to ensure

America's freedom, but do not have the support of their fellow Americans in this personal battle of illness means that the prominence of this disease needs to be more publicly addressed.

Veterans that do not receive treatment for their mental illness are more susceptible to suicide than those that receive treatment. According to the VA, 18% of all adult suicides in the United States are from veterans, while veterans only account for 8.5% of the United States population ("Suicide in the Military"). The link between veteran suicide and mental illness specifically PTSD, clearly exists, and with more awareness and gateways for veterans to receive help for their illness, the percentages will lower. According to the Mental Health and First Aid organization, less than 50% of returning veterans receive any kind of mental health treatment, which can lead to higher risk of developing a mental illness such as PTSD ("Veterans and Military"). These higher risk individuals need to receive the help quicker, in order to ensure that they do not fall victim to the perils of mental illness.

Men and women perceived to be among the strongest in the nation, willing to put their lives on the line for the safety of this country and its values, should not be made to suffer in silence as Americans reap the benefits the veterans have brought, but rather should act as allies and provide service to those who have served and take action to lower the rates of veterans suffering from PTSD and other mental illnesses.

Works Cited

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