PROVIDING COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY FOR VETERANS: A GRANT PROPOSAL

ROGELIO BECERRA
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH
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Introduction

- The Institute of Medicine (IOM) released a report, entitled Treatment for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in Military and Veteran Populations, in July 2012. The report comprehensively reviewed government programs used in the treatment of PTSD and other mental illnesses. The IOM found a lack of monitoring, coordination, and assessment by both the Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Defense (DoD) (Institute of Medicine, 2012).

  - The IOM found that mental health treatment options are not reaching everyone in need and that these departments are not keeping track of which treatment methods are being used or evaluating their effectiveness.

- Provider assistance is limited, as only half of the individuals diagnosed with major depression or PTSD are open to receiving services to address these issues (Tanielian, 2011).

- The purpose of this grant would be to increase the community’s awareness of mental illness and its many effects on U.S. veterans. The community collaboration that this grant will provide will assist the proposed program in obtaining necessary information to focus outreach efforts to populations not currently targeted by existing services for veterans.
Social Work Relevance

- The social work relevance of the program is to increase the awareness among like-minded peers such as health professionals toward a common goal of assisting veterans in all areas of life. The goal is to support our nation's veterans and acknowledge the unique struggles they have faced and will face during their mental health recovery path. This collaborative approach can instill the hope and positive thinking veterans will need to make plans for their future success.

- The National Association of Social Workers (2012) states that services are provided at all levels and in a wide range of settings to veterans from all eras/conflicts and Service Members in all branches including their family members and loved ones.
Cross-cultural Relevance

- Presently different cultural and ethnic groups serve within the ranks of the military. According to the American Community Survey (2008), the US veteran population consists of 85% White (non-Hispanic), 10.3% Black (non-Hispanic), 5.1% Hispanic/Latino, 1.3% Asian American or Pacific Islander and 0.7% American Indian or Alaska Native (Savitsky et al., 2009). PTSD and major depression have been shown to affect veterans from different groups at varying rates (Pittman et al., 2012); however, finding out what exactly is the cause of this is complicated. For example, Latinos that are currently serving in the military may be at a greater risk for developing depression or PTSD (Pittman et al., 2012).

- Along with having more severe symptoms the problems affecting this group can be possibly attributed to increased combat exposure, culturally-specific differences, or previous exposure to traumatic situations.
Methods

- **Target Population**
  - The target population of this grant is combat veterans suffering from depression and/or PTSD that will be seeking Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) services through the Cambodian Association of America (CAA) in Long Beach, California.
  - For the purpose of this program, eligible participants can be from any military conflict, ages 18-55, will be in screened by staff for a prior mental health diagnosis, and must reside in the Long Beach area currently served by the CAA.

- **Strategies Used to Identify and Selecting a Funding Source**
  - This writer utilized the Long Beach Non-Profit Library (LBNP) database along with the search engines: Google, Yahoo, MSN, and Bing in the search for funders.
  - For each of these methods, key words and phrases were used to find funders that had the same interests this grant was attempting to achieve. Key words included: “Grant providers for military,” “programs for depression,” “programs for PTSD,” “mental health grants for veterans,” “veteran support,” and “grants for veterans.”
Identification of a Funding Source

- The Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) was identified as the most suitable funder.
- The WWP funds programs that are able to serve combat veterans returning home and attempting to reintegrate back into the civilian community.
- The WWP is interested in funding programs that seek to enhance the lives of combat veterans, by using structured services to improve mental health and create new opportunities for veterans.

Needs Assessment

- In the pursuit of developing a comprehensive needs assessment, research focused on the mental illnesses within the growing veteran population, who the symptoms effects, and effective treatment for veterans with depression and/or PTSD.

Projected Budget Range and Categories

- The proposed budget range is $134,310 that includes:
  - Personnel Salary & Benefits
  - Direct Program Expenses
  - In-direct Program Costs
Grant Proposal

Program Summary and Description

This grant proposal is intended to seek funding for development and implementation of a CBT program named Vet Assist. Services will include an examination between an individual’s behaviors, thoughts, and feelings through the use of CBT to assist with diagnosed mental illnesses. Vet Assist goals will serve to assist veterans overcome barriers that impair daily functioning brought on by PTSD and/or depression symptoms.

Vet Assist will follow the three broad phases of CBT to assist the veterans in managing their mental health. During the initial phase, facilitators will assess the participants’ expectations and motivations for treatment, onset of symptoms, symptoms, and behaviors being experienced, frequency of symptoms, and functional impairments. The middle phase explores behavioral and cognitive strategies to address the veterans’ unhealthy behaviors and/or thoughts. During the ending phase, emphasis is placed on a termination plan and relapse prevention strategies.

Population Served

Individuals being served by this program must be at least 18 years of age or older at the start of the screening process, reside in Long Beach, California, a veteran from any conflict, and be screened for eligibility of CBT services.
Grant Proposal (continued)

Sustainability

Currently, the CAA manages over seventeen programs funded by several entities such as federal, state, county, city and private foundations. With increased community success, in 2000, the CAA extended services to assist a wider group of ethnicities and groups within the Long Beach, CA community.

Program Objectives

- Develop and implement a community-based, veteran-focused structured CBT program.
- Teach healthy coping and adjust behavior accordingly.

Program Evaluation

- The intake process for veterans will include administration of a Depression and PTSD rating scales and a pre-treatment questionnaire to measure the individuals’ current coping strategies. This information will be utilized by LCSWs to individualize treatment to the needs of the veteran.
- At the end of each treatment phase, a questionnaire will also be administered to identify impacts upon the individual’s present functioning.
- At termination, depression and PTSD symptoms will be measured once again along with a post-treatment questionnaire to gather information regarding effectiveness of Vet Assist.
Lessons Learned/Implications for Social work

- **Lessons Learned**
  - Throughout this project, many lessons were learned and knowledge was gained in several areas. Working with individuals in a wide range of mental health settings, this writer obtained an interest in expanding available services to this specific population. This writer processed ideas based on interests and experiences for the grant writing topic. Through the learning process the importance of exploring options became evident and these experiences were vastly educational. This allowed the writer to find and explore a viable resource for this widely expanding population.

- **Implications for Social Work**
  - The NASW describes the importance in assisting our country’s veterans. The NASW (2012) states that social work services for service members may include case management, care coordination, children and family services, administration, social support, health services, advocacy as well as mental and behavioral health services.
  
  - The proposed Vet Assist program was developed to focus on the veteran population not being served by Veteran Affairs (VA) resources. This grant proposal hopes to highlight the great need for mental health services within this population. Social work practice provides a wide range of collaborative skills that assist in reaching out to the community to promote the identification of existing barriers veterans face. Improving the lives of veterans ultimately improves the community as a whole. The sooner light is shed to this growing issue, the sooner veterans can receive adequate services.
References


