Introduction

- Veterans are at an increased risk for mental health issues post deployment, and are in need of services.
- Studies have shown that between 20 and 40% of veterans with PTSD are experiencing some form of psychosis (Chisholm, Freeman, & Cooke, 2006; Mueser & Rosenberg, 2003; Sin et al., 2010).
- Returning soldiers felt that they made it through war, and could make it through civilian life as well. This belief led them to feel that mental health assistance was unnecessary (McFall, Malte, Fontana, & Rosenheck, 2000).
- Studies have shown that up to 93% of people being hospitalized for psychosis have experienced at least one traumatic event (Kilcommons & Morrison, 2005; Neria, Bromet, Sievers, Lavelle, & Fochtmann, 2002; Tarrier, Khan, Cater, & Picken, 2007)
- The goal of this program is to assist Veterans adjust to life as a civilian and to improve the overall mental health of the returning veterans.
Social Work strives to fill social gaps in service. In the veteran population, many people are at risk for several different mental health disorders. In some disorders, the veteran population is overrepresented, PTSD being one of them (Demers, 2011). Homelessness is also a major threat to this population. Veterans make up a large part of this population. Women veterans, in particular, are vulnerable to homelessness (Hamilton, Poza, Hines, & Washington, 2012). Both PTSD and homelessness are high risk factors for development of psychosis (Kastelan et al., 2007; NAMI, 2013). Of the veterans that need help only about 1 in 10 get the help that they need (Ouimette et al., 2011). Social work can address this problem and implement interventions to improve the quality of life that veterans can achieve.
Cultural Applicability

- Throughout the military, minority populations are currently overrepresented. In fact, 30% of the U.S. military is represented by Hispanic and Black people (National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, 2013). This does not include biracial, multiracial, Asian, Native American, or any other minority. This statistic leans toward the creation of a culturally competent curriculum that is directed at the needs of the individual minority groups. African Americans and Hispanic veterans are overrepresented in those receiving VA health care services (Ouimette et al, 2011). The creation of culturally competent programs in order to service this overrepresented population will fill the gap in service.

- Since the start of combat operations, over 2 million soldiers have been deployed in support of OIF and OEF (Stecker, Fortney, Hamilton, & Ajzen, 2007). Veterans from OIF and OEF have been assessed to have no greater need for treatment or greater trauma due to service (Erbes, Curry, & Leskela, 2009). This suggests that veterans of OIF and OEF express their symptoms differently. Programs aimed at addressing differences in symptom expression will need to be informed by those using the service and those who have needs that are being unmet.
Methods

- **Target population**
  - Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) veterans aged 18-30.

- **Funding**
  - In order to fund this project approximately $500,000 will be needed.
  - National Institute of Health offers funding opportunities that span many different aspects of mental health
    - RFA-MH-14-212 offered by the National Institute of Mental Health offered an opportunity to create a program focused on Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in veterans
Methods

- Needs assessment
  - In order to determine the need for a program addressing the mental health concern of psychosis in transitioning veterans, different methods of assessment were conducted. A review of literature to determine themes and suggested future works was be conducted. A visit to service agencies such as the VA was made in order to determine the services provided and to identify the gaps in service for the targeted population. Through these methods of assessment the needs for the creation and funding of a Preventative Intervention Program for Veterans has been supported.
Grant Proposal

- **Program Summary and Description**
  - The program created will serve to preventatively intervene in veterans who are experiencing symptoms of PTSD. Many symptoms of PTSD are similar to prodromal symptoms of psychosis.

- **Population Served**
  - OIF and OEF veterans who exhibit moderate levels of psychosis.

- **Sustainability**
  - Pairing with the Veterans Affair’s Medical Center in Long Beach, CA will allow for a steady influx of clients and assist in ensuring recruitment efforts are being targeted at the correct population.
Grant Proposal

- **Program Objectives**
  - The overall goal of the VPIP is to increase the quality of care provided to all persons experiencing early stages of psychosis. Through this program veterans in specific will take part in an experiment to improve the quality of early intervention and detection of psychotic symptoms.

- **Program Evaluation:**
  - Successful intervention will be considered when the client’s Schizophrenia Proneness Instrument, Adult Version (SPI-A) rating is lessened when compared to entry level. Intervention can also be considered successful when the client’s SPI-A score has not risen from initial evaluation but the client’s MORS score is rated at 7 or higher.
Lessons Learned

- Finding flaws is easier than finding solutions.
- Being thorough and realistic can be difficult to reconcile.
- Finding an appropriate funding source is a daunting undertaking.
References


