Caring for the Older Adult Veteran Population: Critical Considerations
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BACKGROUND
- By 2035, older adult population (≥ 65 y/o) will be higher than population of children < 18 y/o
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs estimates a total of 11 million Veterans ≥ age 60 in 2019
- Must prepare to meet the burden of delivering health care to older adults

CRITICAL ANALYSIS
Multi-focal, complex care:
- Pre-existing co-morbid conditions
- Service-related physical conditions
- Mental & behavioral health conditions:
  - Pre-existing & service-related conditions
Veteran-centric Culture & Subcultures:
  - Standards of behavior & discipline
  - Military values, customs, & traditions
  - Branch of service
  - Era of service
  - Warrior Ethos
  - Deployment & reintegration

PREPARING FUTURE NPs TO CARE FOR VETERANS IN VA AND CIVILIAN SETTINGS:
- Integration of Veteran-centric content into NP curricula
- Innovative approaches to compliance with:
    - Lead & manage collaborative efforts (Interprofessional collaboration)
    - Nurse Residency Programs
    - Prepare & enable nurses to lead change & advance health
  - NONPF Competencies related to population health
  - QSEN Core Competencies for Interprofessional Collaborative Practice & Quality and Safety

VETERAN-CENTRIC HEALTH CARE CONCERNS

MENTAL HEALTH/BEHAVIORAL ADJUSTMENT DISORDERS:
- PTSD
- Depression
- TBI
- Suicide risk
- Substance Use Disorders

CHRONIC ISSUES:
- Hypertension
- Lung disease
- Chronic pain
- Tinnitus/Hearing loss
- Amputations
- Homelessness
- Hazardous exposures
- Rehabilitation care

GUIDANCE FOR PRACTICE
- Obtain military health history:
  (Always ask for permission to ask questions)
  - Military experience, service connected health issues, sexual assault, environmental exposures, blood-borne virus exposure, living situation, stress, mental health, support system, substance use/abuse, transportation
- Identify & learn the culture and language specific to Veterans – vital for effective communication & establishing a trusting relationship
- Become familiar with mission & core values of each branch of the military
- Assess effects of military culture on health care engagement & behaviors (Warrior Ethos)
- Be aware of personal biases & attitudes
- Assess for moral injury related to service
- Individualize care - inclusive of Veteran-centric culture and service-related conditions
- Coordinate care with VA and/or other community providers
- Know and have resources available for Veterans

REFERENCES
Available upon request