



Rules of Engagement: Reaching and Keeping Veteran's in the VHA

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Overview

- Engagement Defined (Paul)
- Opportunities for Engagement (Paul)
- Threats for Engagement (Kiersten & Paul)
 - Rural
 - Age
 - Gender-Specific
- Practice Example @ CINDRR (Kiersten)
- Retention
- Discussion

Veteran Engagement –

- **Healthcare:** Participating in an adequate number of HC encounters and self-care activities to achieve a therapeutic effect
(CREATE, 2016)
- **Research:** Meaningful involvement of Veterans and/or caregivers throughout the research process (Design/Conduct > Dissemination) (PCORI, 2016; HSR&D Veteran Engagement Workgroup, 2016)

Opportunities

- HSR&D Support
- VA out-performs private sector in QOC and patient safety
- 800 CBOCS
- Veteran Service Organizations (VSO's)
- Volunteerism equal to general populous
 - 15-36%

Threats

- Historic lack of interaction with private-sector health care
- Utilization by post-911 veterans
 - 44% (43% all other Vets)
- Compared to all other Vets:
 - Single
 - No income
 - Live in house with food stamps

Rural Veteran Demographics

- About 24% of the overall Veteran population resides in rural areas
- 6% of rural Veterans are women
- 8% are minorities (African-American, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska Native)
- Rural Veterans represent 36% of the total enrolled in VA health care.

Rural Veteran Demographics

- Median age for rural Veterans falls between the 55 to 64 year range
- Rural Veterans are less racially diverse than Urban Veterans
- Rural Veterans have higher concentrations in lower level education categories (< high school degree) than urban Veterans
- More Vietnam era Veterans live in rural communities than in urban communities

Threats

Three evolving population trends place significant demands on VA and rural delivery systems— these also pose challenges for rural Veteran engagement (Gale and Heady 2013):

- Aging of rural Veterans (Over 72% of rural Veterans are age 55 and up)
- Growing number of female Veterans (Currently 9% of Veterans are women. Expected to grow to 12% by 2030)
- Homeless Veterans

Threats

Barriers to Rural Veteran engagement in research:

- Long travel distances to community and VA services- limited access to transportation
 - CINDRR VEC planning council decided to give veterans the option to meet via conference call or in person
 - Working on incorporating a plan for tele-engagement via other modes of technology

Threats

Barriers to Rural Veteran engagement in research:

- Limited internet access
 - This makes outreach to rural Veterans challenging since recruitment methods utilized social media outreach was used as a main method of VEC recruitment
 - Partnership through local public radio for marketing assisted in the recruitment of about half of the current applicants.

Threats

Gender-specific barriers to engagement with rural women Veterans:

- Highly rural women Veterans are less likely to access mental healthcare (Brooks et al. 2013)
- Some women Veterans may identify as caregivers. They may be caregivers to another veteran which may pose additional challenges

Threats

Gender-specific barriers to engagement with rural women Veterans:

- Some women may not identify as veterans.
When asked the question (Downs 2016): Do you consider yourself to be a military veteran?
96.41% of those surveyed answered “yes” while 3.59% surveyed answered “no” (n=640).

Threats

Gender-specific barriers to engagement with rural women Veterans:

- Those who do not “know” their veteran status are a different group than those who may not “identify” with their veteran status (which was the context of this question). Those who do not “know” they are veterans would not have taken part in this survey.

Threats

Gender-specific barriers to engagement with rural women Veterans:

- For those who answered “no” primary reasons:
 - “did not deploy”
 - “did not fire weapon”
 - “did not see combat”
 - “never completed full enlistment”

Threats

Gender-specific barriers to engagement with rural women Veterans:

- For those who answered “no” primary reasons:
 - “service was too traumatic
 - “wanted to forget it”
 - “don’t have a disability”
 - “as a dependent spouse, my service seems to be erased”

Current Progress

CINDRR VEC Implementation Timeline

- Initiated August 2015
 - Focus on QUERI until March 2016
- Initial Veteran Engagement Planning Meeting
 - May 23, 2016
- Recruitment
 - July 1 – September 1
- Interviewing of VEC members
 - August and September
- Selection of VEC members
 - October 1

- CINDRR Investigator Orientation
 - Fall 2016
 - PCORI training materials
- Veteran Engagement Council Orientation
 - January 2017
- First meeting
 - January 2017
- Veteran-Investigator Feedback Loop (Ongoing)

Retention

- HC Industry Lessons
- Transferability to the VA
- Mutual understanding of challenges

Van Doorn, J., Lemon, K. N., Mittal, V., Nass, S., Pick, D., Pirner, P., & Verhoef, P. C. (2010). Customer engagement behavior: Theoretical foundations and research directions. *Journal of Service Research*, 13(3), 253-266.

Discussion

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- Opportunities for Engagement (Paul)
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CINDRR Website:

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