



Post-deployment Readjustment Needs of Puerto Rican OEF/OIF Veterans & Families

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AcademyHealth 2008 Annual Research Meeting
Washington, D.C., June 8, 2008





Background

- OEF/OIF veterans face unprecedented readjustment issues post-deployment
- Depression and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are prevalent (RAND, 2008)
- Most research on the impact of OEF/OIF involves veterans living in the mainland U.S.



Background (Continued)

- OEF/OIF veterans face unprecedented readjustment issues post-deployment
- Puerto Rico (PR) has a strong military history and a large military-related community
 - Readjustment issues may be different than for mainland
 - Impact of OEF/OIF on Puerto Rican veterans & families not well understood



Research Objective

To carry out in-depth qualitative interviews with Puerto Rican veterans & families to explore

- Perspectives
- Unmet readjustment needs



Location of Site

Puerto Rico Veteran Health Administration Sites.

Legend

Major Roads

Road Classification

- Limited Access
- Highways
- Secondary Roads
- - - Other

Drive Times in minutes

- 15
- 30
- 60
- 90
- 120
- More than 120 minutes



Map Created by: Eric R. Litt
Map Creation date: April 29, 2008
Map Created For: Lisa Hanold Ph.D.
Project: DAV/NOVA Foundation
ArcGIS 9.2



Sample

- 8 Veterans, 8 Family members

Inclusion/exclusion criteria

- \geq One month post-deployment
- Native born Puerto Rican
- Living in Puerto Rico before & after deployment



Sample Demographics

	Mean Age	Gender		Marital Status		
		M	F	S	M	D
Veteran	27.25	87.25% (7/8)	12.50% (1/8)	12.5% (1/8)	62.5% (5/8)	25.0% (2/8)
Family Member	36.6	12.50% (1/8)	87.25% (7/8)	----	100% (8/8)	----

Veteran military branch:

- 25.0% Army Reserve (2/8)
- 37.5% Army (3/8)
- 25.0% Air National Guard (2/8)
- 12.5% National Guard (1/8)

Family member relationship with OIF/OEF veteran:

- 75% Spouse (6/8)
- 12.5% Parent (1/8)
- 12.5% Relative (1/8)



Data Collection

Single, in-depth semi-structured patient interviews (16 total)

- 13/16 conducted in PR Spanish
- 3/16 conducted in English
- Transcribed verbatim
 - Verified translations into English



Sample questions from Veteran Interview Guide

1.	<p>I would like to talk with you about how you are managing and what are some things that help you cope better during the transition from active duty to civilian life.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> If you could talk to the head of the VA about services for returning soldiers in Puerto Rico what would you suggest to him to help other soldiers readjust?</p>
2.	<p>Let's talk some about the barriers that you have faced since returning.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> What would you identify as three of the major or most significant barriers you have faced in making a transition back into civilian life?</p>
3.	<p>What health care services or benefits do you need, but have been unable to obtain?</p>



Analysis

- Transcripts were coded using N6 software
- Use of the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)
- Prominent themes and relationships were identified



Results

Unmet readjustment needs often result from barriers to accessing VA services



Two prominent themes

- 1) Unmet needs related to psychological services
- 2) Unmet educational needs regarding VA benefits & compensation programs



Need For Immediate Psych. Evaluations

Family Member: "... and **psychologically** he will need to be in some sort of **treatment**, because... (Laughs) ...uh.... I see a lot of... **change**.. truly (with a sadder tone and softer)... a **psychological treatment** that they do a study to see **how his mind is**...a... a very good exam.... very detailed."



RORC

A Need for “Routine” Psych. Evals.

Veteran: “... they check you... inside like that... like a tune up... complete, but **emotionally no... they don't check you as a routine...** and yes... it **would be great** that also... they **had a psychologist as routine...** for... you know sometimes there are people that are so closed up that they don't want... to say anything...”



Responding to unmet needs: Preferences for counseling services

Family Members

- Individual counseling for spouse & veteran followed by support groups
- "Adjustment" oriented support groups for entire family
- In-home support services
- Services needed outside San Juan

Veterans

- Marriage or couples counseling
- Support groups for veterans
- "Educationally" oriented support groups for families
- Services needed outside San Juan



Example: Unmet Educational Needs about Benefits

Veteran: "... they don't put a lot but to say "ok these are the **benefits** you have"... **it is a little difficult if you ask—no one knows what to say or...** "look, you can't do this because you don't have that"... look... **makes it difficult to understand the benefits.**"



Conclusions

Veterans & Families living in PR need transition services to facilitate readjustment

- Access to a range of readjustment counseling services outside San Juan
- Education regarding VA benefits & compensation programs



Implications

- Findings may lead to culturally appropriate interventions/programs to facilitate readjustment among veterans & families
- Findings led to a funded study to develop Spanish readjustment-related education materials for Puerto Rican veterans & families.



Acknowledgements

Abstract Authors:

- Elizabeth "Lisa" Hannold, PhD
- I. Magaly Freytes, PhD
- Jessica Bober, BS
- Constance Uphold, PhD, ARNP, FAAN

Funding Sources:

- Disabled American Veterans/NOVA Foundation
- VA HSR&D/RR&D Rehabilitation Outcomes Research Center (RORC) Research Enhancement Award Program (REAP), Gainesville, FL



Coding Framework

Name	Sources	References	Created	Modifi
Barriers to accessing VA services	1	1	4/28/2008 2:01 PM	4/28/
Changes in family roles	1	5	4/23/2008 10:32 AM	4/23/
Family coping mechanisms	1	4	4/23/2008 10:20 AM	4/23/
Family fears and worrying	1	3	4/23/2008 11:05 AM	4/23/
Family service needs	5	8	3/17/2008 12:25 PM	4/7/2
Impact of veteran's deployment or return on family health statu	1	5	4/23/2008 10:16 AM	4/23/
Personal story	3	22	4/8/2008 12:39 PM	4/18/
Veterans' service needs	5	8	3/17/2008 12:25 PM	4/23/
Family assessme	1	1	4/23/2008 10:12 AM	4/23/2008
Physical & Mental	0	0	3/28/2008 1:14 PM	3/28/2008
Need for faster response & f	2	10	3/28/2008 1:02 PM	4/7/2008 2:43 PM
A diagnosis is critical	1	2	4/3/2008 10:31 AM	4/3/2008 11:37 AM
Determination of Service C	4	9	4/3/2008 10:23 AM	4/18/2008 3:57 PM
Impact of slow response	1	1	4/2/2008 3:04 PM	4/2/2008 3:42 PM
Need for a thorough physic	4	11	3/17/2008 12:27 PM	4/23/2008 11:55 AM
Pain	1	5	3/28/2008 1:00 PM	4/3/2008 11:51 AM
Need for thorough psycholo	6	25	3/17/2008 12:28 PM	4/7/2008 3:45 PM
Need for veteran transition	4	10	3/17/2008 3:28 PM	4/18/2008 1:12 PM
Employment needs	1	1	4/7/2008 10:42 AM	4/8/2008 12:11 PM
Need for veteran support g	2	5	3/28/2008 11:35 AM	4/8/2008 9:06 AM
Psychological adjustment	3	6	4/8/2008 9:02 AM	4/18/2008 1:23 PM
Coping mechanisms	1	2	4/8/2008 11:52 AM	4/18/2008 1:17 PM
Perceived burden on oth	1	1	4/8/2008 11:38 AM	4/8/2008 11:48 AM
Perceived support of pee	3	4	4/3/2008 1:15 PM	4/8/2008 12:34 PM
Psychological symptoms	1	2	3/17/2008 12:29 PM	4/14/2008 11:28 AM
Suggested improvements	0	0	4/8/2008 12:15 PM	4/8/2008 12:15 PM