

Disparities in Health-Related internet use by US Veterans: Results From a National Survey

The internet is an important tool that can be used to increase access to health information as well as deliver health information to patients. Researchers conducted a study to investigate health related internet use in 3,408 veterans across the US. Out of 54% of these veterans who had used the internet at all, only 29% of veterans had used the internet for health reasons. Results showed that among veterans who used the internet, worse health was associated with a greater likelihood to use the internet for health reasons. Internet use for health reasons was positively associated with urban locations, as opposed to rural locations.

These findings demonstrate the need for increased efforts to improve health-related internet use for veterans, especially for those in rural areas. The study also confirms the VA's recent focus on improving access to health care for veterans in rural and highly rural areas as a definite area of need.

Citation: McInnes DK, Gifford AL, Kazis, LE, and Wagner, TH. *Disparities in health-related internet use by US veterans: Results from a national survey.* Informatics in Primary Care. 2010; 18:59-68.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Health Related Internet use by US Vets
 - Did You Know?
- Mental Health Treatment Retention in Newly Returning Vets

Did You Know?

- According to data from The National Comorbidity Survey, only 50% to 60% of the estimated 10 million persons in the US with a serious mental illness receive treatment. In addition, recent studies have shown that 20% to 57% of patients undergoing mental health treatment drop out after the first session.
- In total, 70% to 80% of Americans use the internet regularly. About 63% of Americans have used the internet to search for health information, according to the Pew Internet and American Life Project.
- My HealthVet, a Personal Health Record system created by VHA, allows veterans to refill prescriptions, maintain and produce health logs, and receive reminders for screenings and health tests. More information can be found at: <http://www.myhealth.va.gov/>



Serving Those Who Served: Retention of Newly Returning Veterans From Iraq and Afghanistan in Mental Health Treatment

There is a growing concern about retention in mental health treatment for US veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Premature dropout during mental health treatment is a problem because the standard number of psychotherapy sessions needed for recovery is a minimum of nine to fifteen sessions. Recent studies have shown that 20% to 57% of mental health patients prematurely dropout of treatment, hindering the effectiveness of the treatment. Researchers in this study aimed to investigate retention in PTSD treatment in veterans returning from wars. National VA administrative data was evaluated, which consisted of veterans who were treated for PTSD by the Veterans Health Administration.

After surveying 3 groups of veterans, researchers found that 11% to 17% of veterans should be diagnosed with a mental disorder. However, only 13% to 21% of veterans actually received treatment from a mental health professional during the past year, out of the 78% to 86% of veterans who screened positive for a mental disorder. Interesting findings were revealed for veterans in rural areas. Results showed that veterans in rural communities were actually less likely to discontinue PTSD treatment during their first year of diagnosis. However, veterans in rural areas had less PTSD mental health services available, and these services were less intense. Future efforts should focus on increasing the intensity of mental health services for veterans in rural areas.

Citation: Harpaz-Rotem I and Rosenheck RA. *Serving Those Who Served: Retention of Newly Returning Veterans From Iraq and Afghanistan in Mental Health Treatment.* Psychiatric Services. 2011; Jan(62) No. 1:22-27.

