

The Veterans Metrics Initiative

Need

Nearly 250,000 veterans are projected to leave military service annually over the next four to five years. Tens of thousands of programs are offered by the public and private sectors to assist veterans as they transition and reintegrate. Yet no evidence-based methods exist to determine the actual impacts—if any—of these programs on veterans' long-term well-being outcomes.

Goal

To improve the well-being of veterans and their families by conducting collaborative, translational metrics-related research.

Approach

Through The Veterans Metrics Initiative (TVMI), HJF builds and sustains public-private partnership teams of actively engaged Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Department of Defense (DoD), and civilian researchers and advisors. The teams strategically design and conduct integrated research studies to develop ways to measure the impacts of numerous publicly and privately sponsored interventions on the long-term well-being of veterans and their families. The findings are made available to a broad range of stakeholders to help guide their development, delivery, and use of veteran transition assistance programs.

TVMI Study

In April 2015, HJF launched The Veterans Metrics Initiative: Linking Program Components to Post-Military Well-Being study (TVMI Study). This highly collaborative public-private research initiative is generating novel information about veterans' experiences transitioning from military to civilian life, and examining how components of programs they use to assist with their transitions correlate with long-term well-being outcomes across multiple domains.

About HJF

The Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine, Inc. (HJF) is a global, nonprofit organization created to accelerate progress in military medicine. Authorized by the U.S. Congress, HJF works to promote military-civilian interchange, support the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) and advance all Department of Defense (DoD) research efforts for the mutual benefit of military and civilian medicine.

From program management to laboratory research, our thorough scientific, administrative and program management services empower researchers and clinicians with the resources they need to find answers and drive change, while removing barriers to success.

Funders

The TVMI Study is publicly and privately funded by Prudential; Wounded Warrior Project; Veterans Health Administration Office of Research and Development; Walmart Foundation; May and Stanley Smith Charitable Trust; Robert R. McCormick Foundation; Schultz Family Foundation; Lockheed Martin Corporation; Health Net Federal Services; Bob Woodruff Foundation; Northrop Grumman; Marge and Phil Odeen; The Heinz Endowments; National Endowment for the Humanities; and HJF.

Contact

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Linking Program Components to Post-Military Well-Being

TVMI Study Design: The TVMI Study follows a cohort of veterans over the first three years of their transition from military to civilian life. Six comprehensive surveys are being administered at six month intervals (Waves 1-6) over the course of the three year period. Each survey assessment is recording participant well-being across four domains: health (mental and physical), vocation (education and career), finances, and social relationships. Participants also identify transition assistance programs they used, if any. Following each assessment, the research team is identifying changes in well-being across various demographic groups, analyzing transition assistance programs identified to distill them into their common components, and examining links between common program components used and well-being outcomes.

TVMI Study Cohort: In the fall of 2016, a cohort of 9,566 veterans was successfully recruited from a representative sample of nearly 50,000 transitioning veterans who were identified in the VA/DoD Identity Repository when they were within 0-90 days of separating from military service. The cohort is highly representative of the entire recently transitioned population of all veterans (with over 1,500 veterans from each of the active components (Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps), and more than 1,200 reserve component members who recently transitioned from activated status). Included in the study cohort that completed the baseline survey (Wave 1) are 1,743 female and 2,703 junior enlisted (i.e., paygrade E1-4) veterans. To date, three follow-on surveys have been successfully administered. Wave 2 of the study closed June 24, 2017, Wave 3 closed December 17, 2017 and Wave 4 closed June 2, 2018. Sample characteristics at each wave of survey administration are summarized in the table below:

Characteristics	Population (N=48,965)	Wave 1 (n= 9,566)	Wave 2 (n= 7,200)	Wave 3 (n= 7,201)	Wave 4 (n= 6,480)
Gender					
Male	84.1 %	81.8 %	81.7 %	81.9 %	81.9%
Female	15.9 %	18.2 %	18.3 %	18.1 %	18.1%
Service Branch					
Army	32.1 %	32.9 %	32.2 %	32.4 %	33.0%
Navy	18.8 %	19.2 %	19.7 %	19.4 %	19.4%
Air Force	13.5 %	19.0 %	19.5 %	19.4 %	19.4%
Marines	17.2 %	15.9 %	16.4 %	16.5 %	16.1%
National Guard/Reserve	18.4 %	12.9 %	12.2 %	12.4 %	12.0%
Paygrade					
E1-4	41.4 %	27.5 %	28.6 %	28.2 %	28.7%
E5-6	29.5 %	30.0 %	29.9 %	30.2 %	30.2%
E7-9	13.4 %	17.9 %	17.2 %	17.0 %	16.9%
W1-5	1.1 %	1.6 %	1.4 %	1.5 %	1.4%
O1-3	6.4 %	8.4 %	8.8 %	8.6 %	8.5%
O4-7+	8.1 %	14.7 %	14.1%	14.5 %	14.3%

Research Outputs: In addition to the generation of important scientific knowledge, the TVMI Study will produce: (1) a validated well-being measures instrument; (2) a menu of common program components shown by the evidence to drive successful veteran outcomes across multiple well-being domains; and (3) a de-identified dataset that can be used by others to better understand veteran well-being and program use along the transition continuum.

Significance of The TVMI Study: Information generated from the TVMI Study could be used by a variety of stakeholders to: (1) learn about well-being domains that are most challenging for veterans at different points along the transition continuum to guide identification of and prompt engagement with at-risk veterans; (2) inform program providers and funders about program components that are associated with improving veterans' well-being outcomes; (3) guide decisions made by the DoD, VA, and policy makers to implement, modify, or cease transition assistance programs for service members and veterans; and (4) lead veterans and their families to programs comprised of components linked to positive outcomes.

Significance of Possible Companion Studies: 6,660 participants in the TVMI Study cohort who are providing longitudinal data about their transition experience consented to be contacted about future research studies. This provides a rich opportunity to add companion studies that could include (without limitation): (1) joining family members/caregivers of study participants to learn about the transition experience of the entire veteran family/caregiver unit; (2) adding objective administrative data to the self-report information provided by TVMI Study participants; and (3) assessing the well-being outcomes of veterans who participate in specific programs as against those who do not.

Leadership: The lead TVMI Study researchers are John Boyle, Ph.D., ICF International; Laurel Copeland, Ph.D., VA Central Western Massachusetts Healthcare System; Erin Finley, Ph.D., MPH, South Texas VA Health Care System; Daniel Perkins, Ph.D., The Pennsylvania State University; and Dawne Vogt, Ph.D., Boston VA Health Care System. The TVMI Study program director is Cynthia L. Gilman, JD, Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine, Inc.