

Press Release

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Veterans and Opioid Use Disorder

According to the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs Office of Research and Development, Substance Use Disorders (SUD)'s have substantial negative consequences on Veterans' mental and physical health, work performance, housing status, and social function. In service members and Veterans, SUD commonly co-occurs with and complicates other conditions or issues. These conditions or issues may be health-related, such as other mental health conditions. They may also be societal, such as homelessness, criminal justice involvement, or unemployment.

Among Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans who were first-time users of VA health care between Oct. 15, 2001, and Sept. 30, 2009, SUD diagnoses were associated with being male, being under 25 years of age, and having been exposed to combat. Of those with a SUD diagnosis, 55 to 75 percent also received a diagnosis for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or depression.

The VA's opioid dependence studies indicate from 2004 to 2012, opioid receipt among VA outpatients increased by nearly 77 percent. As of 2012, some 33 percent of Veterans in VA care received opioids for pain management. Opioids are important in helping people manage their pain, but the long-term effectiveness of opioid therapy for chronic pain is untested. Opioid use is also associated with a number of serious risks, including death from unintentional overdose, suicide, accidents related to sedation, and interactions with other medications. VA has developed a clinical practice guideline for opioid therapy for constant pain. The guideline outlines practices designed to reduce the risks and increase the effectiveness of opioid therapy.

The Office of Research and Development supports a broad range of research looking at substance abuse prevention, screening, and treatment for Veterans. Some researchers are looking at treatment-seeking patterns: why and when Veterans ask for help—and why many don't. Treatment strategies, including cognitive behavioral strategies and Web-based approaches, are also being studied. Other researchers are working to identify the most effective therapies for co-morbid disorders, such as depression and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and attempting to determine if early intervention improves outcomes. Still others are focusing on how readjustment issues relate to substance abuse. A group called CREATE- Collaborative Research to Enhance and Advance Transformation and Excellence is working to promote value and access in VA's SUD services. The group is doing so by validating and refining quality metrics; evaluating and disseminating low-cost, high impact innovations; and promoting patient and provider knowledge about evidence-based treatment for SUDs.

To learn more about current research conducted by U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs please visit <https://www.research.va.gov/topics/sud.cfm#top>.

The SAFE Glen Cove Coalition is conducting an opioid prevention awareness campaign entitled "Keeping Glen Cove SAFE" to educate and update the community regarding opioid use and its consequences. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or visit SAFE's website to learn more about the Opioid Epidemic at www.safeglencove.org.