

Abstract

Background

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) provides comprehensive health care for eligible veterans in the United States. Gulf War II veterans are defined by those that served in conflicts after September 11, 2001 (Holder, 2018). While younger, these veterans have complex mental and physical health needs (Holder, 2018; GAO, 2015). They have reported multiple barriers to the completion of registration and enrollment at the VHA (GAO, 2011; Ahern et al., 2015; Washington et al., 2015; Wittrock et al., 2015; Aronson et al., 2019; Derefinko et al., 2019). Wasnak & Holmes (2017) reported that less than 18 percent of eligible Gulf War II veterans have completed the eligibility and registration process at the VHA.

Methods

This project was a descriptive design using an anonymous fourteen-question Qualtrics survey to ascertain intent, confidence, as well as specific barriers to the completion of the eligibility, registration and enrollment process at the Veterans Health Administration among Gulf War II veterans. Demographic included sex, age, military branch, rank at separation and time elapsed since separation. No identifiable participant data was collected. Recruitment of participants used a weekly post of the survey link to a private Facebook veterans' group.

Results

Twelve veterans completed the survey. The participants were mostly male veterans, from the Army, aged 30 to 51 years old. Most of the respondents had completed the enrollment and registration process already; half of the responses expressed confidence in the process. The most common barriers reported were concerns with timeliness of care and distance to the VHA. Despite these concerns, most veterans believed that care at the VHA would benefit their lives. The most common suggestions to aid veterans through this process were a case manager/VHA, a website/online resource and a veteran contact.

Conclusions

The findings of this study shed a light on the perceptions of veterans and seeking health care at the VHA. The findings were consistent with the literature. The survey results provide an opportunity to the VHA for future interventions.

Keywords: veterans, Veterans Health Administration, barriers to care, registration and enrollment, Theory of Planned Behavior