

Military Wives Matter

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An Internet-based study of military wives' mental health status and barriers to treatment

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Participants

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Questions

Regarding military wives,

1. Can Internet identify those with or at risk of depression ?
2. Are there barriers to mental health treatment ?
3. Is the Internet useful for prevention or treatment of mental health problems and-or for research with this population ?

Agenda

Background

Qualitative findings

Internet survey results

Summary and implications

Background

Military spouses

Active duty	700,000
Reserve / Guard	400,000

Department of Defense, Demographics 2010

Obama M, Strengthening our military families. White House (2011)

Blue Star Families, 2012 Military Family Lifestyle Survey

Population



THE MILITARY WIFE.

Ordinary women need not apply.....

Deployment and mental health

Wives of Utah National Guard Soldiers returned from Iraq:

45% above cut-off on Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression scale
(17% of normative sample above cut-off)

Renshaw et al., J Family Psychology (2008)

LIVE EVERYDAY
like he deploys
TOMORROW  

Treatment and barriers

“ Spouses tell me all the time that
they want to get mental health assistance ...
they really do believe
if they seek help it will have a
negative impact on
their spouse’s military career.”

Deborah Mullen

Wife of Admiral (retired) Michael Mullen

Hefling, Minneapolis Star Tribune (2010)

Population definition

Female ages 18 and older

Married to or significant other of military male

Male on active duty or in Guard or Reserve

Deployed or expected to deploy

Contact with military male during last year

Concerned about mental health

Internet access

(inclusion / exclusion criteria)

Project stages

1. Qualitative interviews
2. Website creation
3. Quantitative surveys

Qualitative study

Interviews and focus groups

Recruitment included snow-ball sampling

Participants (N = 17) chiefly local

Deployment themes

“ Deployment is tough,
I worry about his safety.
But reintegration can be so much worse ”

Participant



Mental health themes

- **Access to services not same as for military or veterans**
- **Reluctant to seek help for fear it will harm husband's career**
- **Misunderstood and diminished by mental health care providers**

Web site construction



MILITARY WIVES MATTER

Has your husband deployed (or will he)?

We don't have to tell you how hard it is. However, if you would like to know more about what to expect and how to deal with it, there's a new website designed to help you. It provides information about how the deployment process may affect you and your family.



www.militarywivesmatter.org



Web site components

- ❖ Survey
- ❖ Information
- ❖ Referral
- ❖ Interaction

Web site features

- ❖ Branching
- ❖ Randomization
- ❖ Interventions
- ❖ Safety
- ❖ Compliance

Survey domains

- ❖ Depression
- ❖ Mental health treatment needed but not received
- ❖ Distress
- ❖ Social support
- ❖ Marital satisfaction
- ❖ Husband's symptoms (as perceived by wife)
- ❖ Attitudes toward seeking mental health treatment - participant and husband (as perceived by wife)

Depression measure

Center for Epidemiologic Studies – Depression (CES-D)

Please tell me how often you have felt this way during the past week,

Sample items

- “I felt depressed”
- “I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing”
- “I thought my life had been a failure”

rarely (less than 1 day) ... most (5 - 7 days)

20-item scale, range 0 to 60

16 or greater = “mild” depression

27 or greater = possible major depressive disorder

Radloff Applied Psychological Measurement (1977)

Barrier indicator

“During the past 12 months, was there any time when you needed mental health treatment or counseling for yourself but didn’t get it?”

National Survey on Drug Use and Health

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Recruitment - traditional

Face-to-face

Snowball

Posters

Fliers

Military newspapers and newsletters (e.g., Fort Lewis Ranger)

Military family assistance centers

Army community service facilities

Recruitment - Internet

Chat rooms

Forums

Web-sites (e.g., “Military Hearts”)

Recruitment - social networking

Twitter

Facebook

Facebook: 4300+ friends

Military Honeys Staying Strong

USMC Silent Ranks

National Guard Love

My Heart Deployed

Camouflaged Love

Military Issued Love

Always Faithful Military Love

GI Joe Stole My Heart

I Heart Camo

Sexually Deprived for your Freedom

Facebook friends



Participants

N = 569

45 states and Guam

(Most: CA, GA, MN, NC, OR, TX, VA, & WA)

Eight foreign countries

Belgium, Costa Rica, Cuba, Germany, Italy,
Japan, South Korea, United Kingdom

Recruitment opened May 2010 and closed July 2011

Participants

Age	29 (range 18 – 56)
Minority	15%
Married	91%
Children	61%
Urban	58%
Unemployed	37%
Insecure	26%

Husbands

Rank	Newly enlisted to general
Enlisted	83%
Army	45%
Active	87%

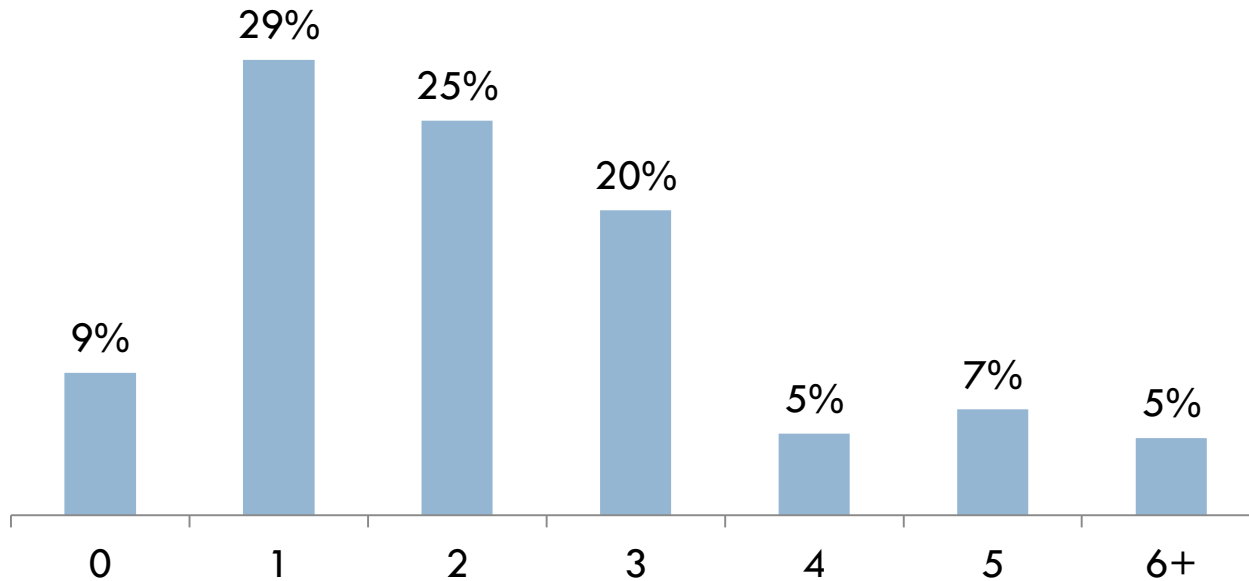
Deployment

Deployed ever 91%

Deployed now 53%

Mean deployments 2.4

How many times has he deployed since 2001?



Depression

Mean score	27
Mild depression only	27%
Major depression	51%

Center for Epidemiologic Studies - Depression Scale

Mild = 16 through 26

Major = 27 or greater

Cronbach alpha = .93

Needed but didn't get mental health treatment

Military wives 44%

National Survey 35%

Past 12 months

General barriers

<u>Barrier</u>	<u>Military wives</u>	<u>National Survey</u>
Time	38%	16%
Confidentiality	27%	10%
Community	19%	7%
Cost	19%	52%

Military specific barriers

Unable to find provider who understands military spouse needs	35%
Couldn't find a counselor that you felt you could trust	29%

Limitations

- Internet based – biased sample
- No husband data
- Few minorities
- Few questionnaires designed for military
- Missing data
- Validity unknown
- Survey contents limited

Summary and implications

- Some (? many ?) military wives distressed and possibly depressed
- Military wives with mental health needs to be addressed
- General barriers such as logistical challenges (e.g., childcare)
- Military specific barriers (e.g., understanding provider)
- Internet may be useful
- Facebook recruitment noteworthy

Further information

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