

Identifying Veterans in Primary Care

An Audit Template for Trainees

Brigadier (Retd) Robin Simpson FRCGP
RCGP Veterans Champion

Based on an idea from Officer Cadet Natasha Brannan RAMC
Foundation Year 2

Could your Practice do more to help Veterans?

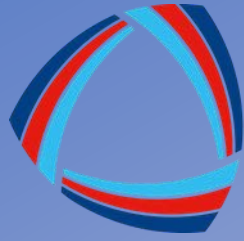
- More than half of veterans (52%) have long-term illness or disability
- Mental Health problems, including PTSD, more common in veterans
- Armed Forces Covenant - no disadvantage' to veterans and their families due to their military service
- How many Veterans are in your Practice?

- **ITN News 16 Dec 2022:**
- Recent study findings

Young military veterans face up to four times higher risk of suicide, new study shows

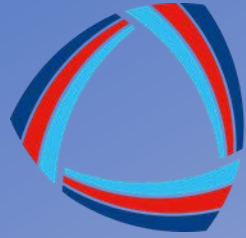
HEALTH | VETERANS | MENTAL HEALTH | Friday 16 December 2022 at 9:55pm





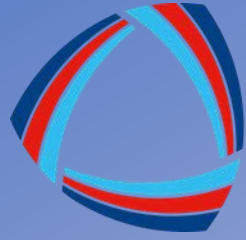
Who is a veteran?

- **Veterans include anyone who has served for at least one day in the Armed Forces (Regular or Reserve)**
- **By far the majority serve over 10 years**



How many veterans are there in UK?

- Around 2.4 million veterans
- Of these, over 50% are aged 75 or older. 85% are male
- 18,000 Service people leave military annually
- 2,500 who leave the Services on medical grounds per annum
- 750,000 UK Armed Forces veterans of working age residing in England and Wales
- 5.4 million adult spouses, partners, widowers and child dependants
- **Each NHS GP will have around 30 or more veterans on their list**

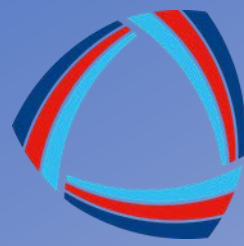


Why are veterans treated as a special group?

- Service in the Armed Forces is different from other occupations.
- Relinquish some of their own civil liberties
- Serving in War dangerous and risk to life.
- Risk of serious injury (for example loss of limbs, eyes or other body parts) is substantially increased.

Know your Veterans

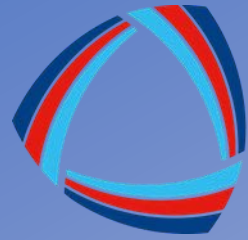
- Patients likely to present in a “crisis” (Randles et al, 2021)
- Knowing your veterans will allow:
 - Signposting to veteran dedicated services
 - Operation Courage – dedicated Mental Health Service for Veterans (England)
 - Priority treatment for conditions attributable to military service



The audit cycle

- **Stage 1 - preparation**
 - Choose a topic
- **Stage 2 - select criteria**
 - Define the criteria / Define the standard
- **Stage 3 - measuring level of performance**
 - Collect and then analyse the data
 - Discuss how well the standards were met
- **Stage 4 - making improvements**
 - Present the results
 - Action Plan
- **Stage 5 - maintaining improvements**
 - Repeat the audit

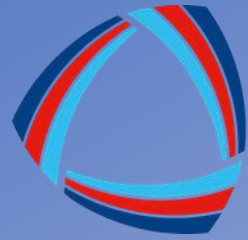




Audit on Veterans in Primary Care – Can a GP recognise Veterans in their Practice Population?

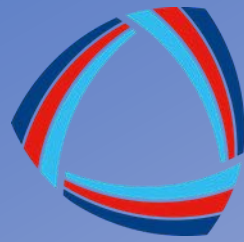
• Stage 1 – preparation

- Veterans make up about 5% of the population
- Service in the Armed Forces is different from other occupations.
- More at risk of some conditions and particularly in Mental Health (alcohol, PTSD) (Simpson et al, 2020)
- Armed Forces Covenant – a promise by the nation to ensure that those who serve or who have served in the armed forces and their families are treated fairly.
- Important topic and needs every veteran to be identified by their GP
- Veterans are poor at seeking help (Simpson et al, 2020)



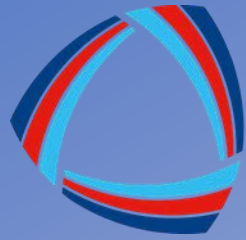
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- **Stage 2 - Define the criteria /Define the standard**
 - If the healthcare of veterans is to be met, then they need to be recognised by their GP using “veterans” Snomed Code (you may need help from your Practice manager to learn how to conduct a Search)
 - Criteria – 1% of the Practice Population should be coded as a Veteran



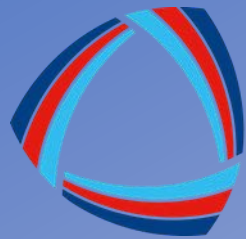
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- **Stage 3 - measuring level of performance**
 - Collect and then analyse the data
 - Search SNOMED code: Type “Military Veteran” (this is the recommended code to use)
 - Other codes: Army Veteran, Royal Navy Veteran, Royal Marine Veteran, Royal Air Force Veteran
 - Have the standards been met?



Audit on Veterans in Primary Care – Can a GP recognise Veterans in their Practice Population?

- Stage 4 - making improvements – how to ensure more Veterans have been identified with correct code
 - At registration ask the question “have you ever served in the Armed Forces?”
 - Consider registering the Practice as RCGP Veterans Friendly – appoint Practice Veterans’ Champion
 - Ask the question “have you ever served in the Armed Forces” when sending text messages to patients
 - National Service ended in in 1963 – males born before 1945 are likely to be Veterans



Armed Forces veteran friendly accredited GP practice



Audit on Veterans in Primary Care – Can a GP recognise Veterans in their Practice Population?

Stage 4 - making improvements – how to ensure more Veterans have been identified with correct code

- Engage with local military charities
- Consider appointing a Veteran onto Patient Participation Group
- Consider Veterans’ Poster in Waiting Room
- How does the Practice commemorate “those who have fallen” on the 11th November?
- Ensure Veterans are recognised and documented in GP notes

Were you ever registered with an Armed Forces GP

Please indicate if you have served in the UK Armed Forces and/or been registered with a Ministry of Defence GP in the UK or overseas: Regular Reservist Veteran Family Member (Spouse, Civil Partner, Service Child)

Address before enlisting: _____

Postcode: _____

Service or Personnel number: _____ Enlistment date: DD MM YY Discharge date: DD MM YY (if applicable)

Footnote: These questions are optional and your answers will not affect your entitlement to register or receive services from the NHS but may improve access to some NHS priority and service charities services.

NHS Family doctor services registration

Patients' details

Male Female Other Nil

Date of birth: _____ Sex: _____

Area of residence: _____

Address before enlisting: _____

Please help us share your previous medical records by providing the following information

Your general address in UK: _____

Address of previous GP practice: _____

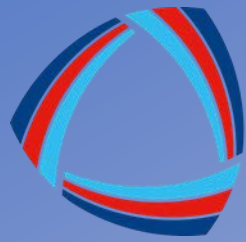
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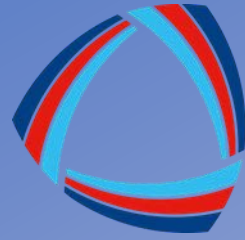
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- **Stage 5 - maintaining improvements**
 - Repeat the audit
 - Aim to have 2% of the Practice population coded as Veterans
- Further Audit Cycles aim for 5%



NHS

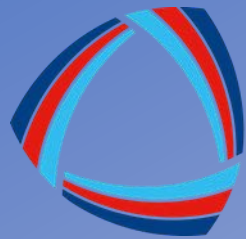
**'With 18,000 serving people
leaving the military annually,
asking patients, 'Have you
ever served in the UK
Armed Forces?' could make
all the difference.'**

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RCGP Veterans Champion

 **Armed Forces veteran
friendly accredited
GP practice**

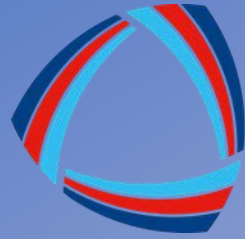
 **Royal College of
General Practitioners**





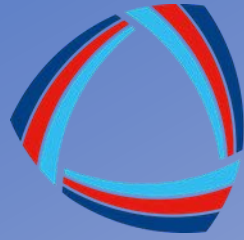
RCGP Veteran Friendly Practices Programme





About the Veterans Accreditation Programme

- RCGP are working with NHS England to accredit GP practices as 'veteran friendly'.
- The programme enables practice to deliver the best possible care and treatment for patients who have served in the armed forces.
- Just over 1781 GP practices (Nov 2022) in England are already accredited through this programme.
- The Veteran Friendly Practices Programme is free, easy to sign up to, requires no additional work for the practice.
- Requires very minimal training for practice leads.



Once accredited

Practices will be provided with an information pack:

- Top Tips for GPs
- Quarterly newsletters
- Training events / Podcasts / Webinars
- Details of Referral Pathways



- **UK military veteran-friendly GP practices** Simpson RG, Leach J. *BMJ Mil Health* 2021;0:1–3. doi:10.1136/bmjmilitary-2020-001734. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmjmilitary-2020-001734>
- **Veteran help-seeking behaviour for mental health issues: a systematic review.** Randles R, Finnegan A. *BMJ Mil Health* 2021; Available at: <https://militaryhealth.bmj.com/content/168/1/99>
- **Mental health outcomes at the end of the British involvement in the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts: a cohort study.** Stevelink SA, Jones M et al. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol 213, Issue 6, p 690-697. Available at: [: https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.2018.175](https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.2018.175)
- **Details of Operation Courage at:** [Mental health support for veterans, service leavers and reservists - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)
- **Veterans' healthcare toolkit -** [Veterans' healthcare toolkit: Veteran friendly GP practice accreditation \(rcgp.org.uk\)](http://rcgp.org.uk)
- **Veteran friendly GP practice accreditation -** [Veteran Friendly Practices Accreditation Form \(office.com\)](http://office.com)