



EFR EMPLOYEE & FAMILY RESOURCES

Going All In for Our Military Heroes: Problem Gambling Among Veterans with PTSD

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Objectives

- Understand combat specific PTSD
- Recognize the role of PTSD in the development of problem gambling behaviors
- Discuss community role in prevention of problem gambling among military populations
- Identify available resources



Describe a Soldier





Soldiers are:

- Brave
- Strong
- Heroic
- Patriotic
- Warrior
- Selfless
- Proud
- Respected
- Confident
- Skilled
- Invincible
- Fearless
- Honorable
- Courageous
- Noble
- Honest
- Dependable
- Detailed
- Powerful
- Proficient
- Resilient



Stigma:

A mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality, or person: "the stigma of mental disorder"





Stigma

“A chain is only as strong as it’s weakest link.”



“No man gets left behind.”

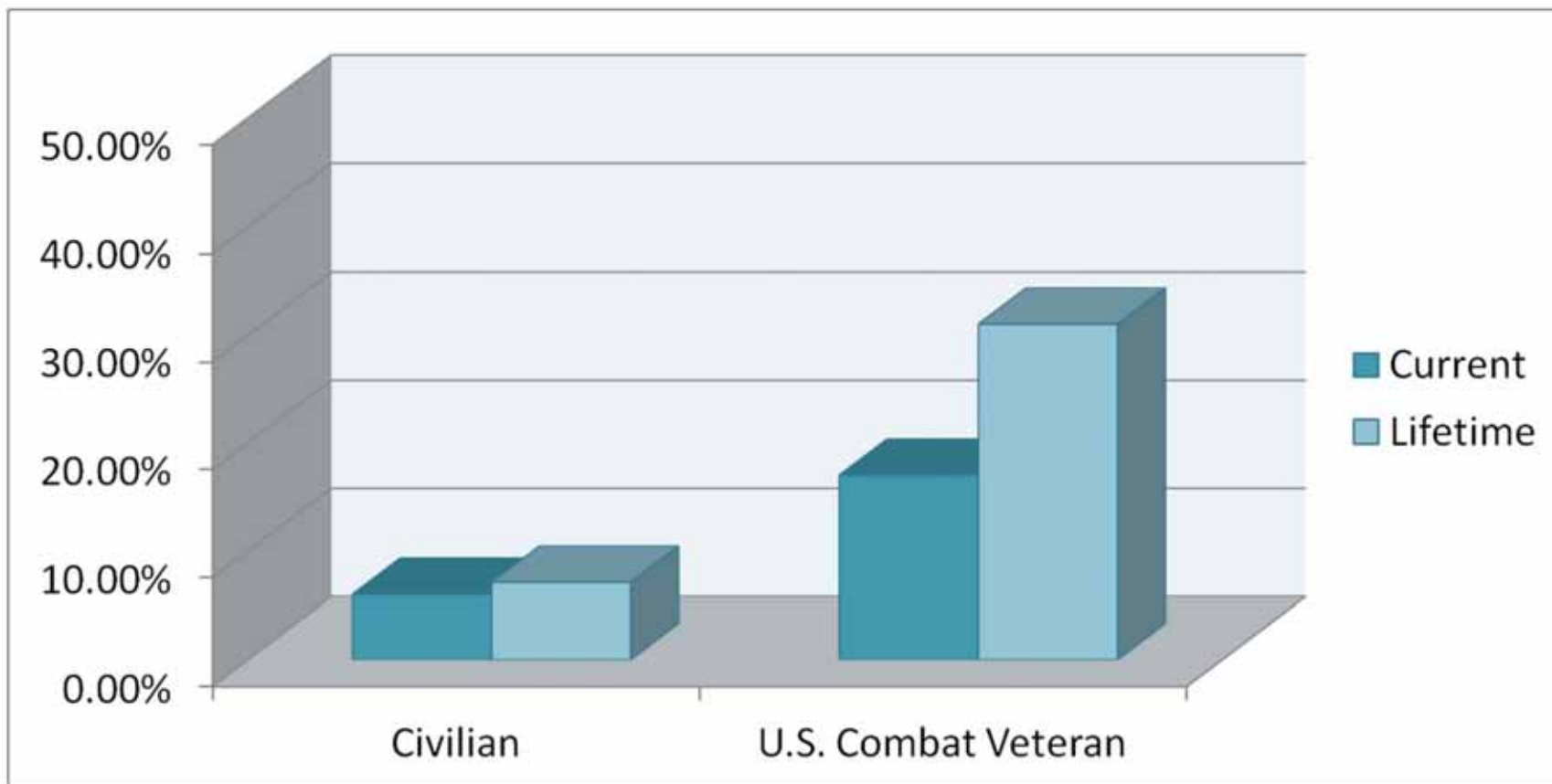


Effects of Stigma

- Self-esteem/pride
- Career
- Rank/status
- Rejection
- Embarrassment
- Helplessness



PTSD Prevalence





Under-reporting

The most commonly reported concerns

- I would be seen as weak (65%)
- Unit leadership would treat me differently (63%)
- Unit would have less confidence in me (59%)
- Difficulty getting time off work (55%)
- Leaders would blame me for the problem (51%)
- It would harm my career (50%)

Hoge et al. (2004) Combat duty in Iraq and Afghanistan,
mental health problems and barriers to care.



Combat Related PTSD Basics

- Prevalence
- Delayed onset
- Multiple deployments
- Extended tours
- Bodily injury
- Physical attack
- Witnessing death



Combat PTSD Primary Symptoms

Fast path - Slow path

Three groups:

- Intrusive (re-experiencing)
- Avoidant
- Hyperarousal



Intrusive (re-experiencing)

- Distressing recollections
- Flashbacks
- Nightmares

These symptoms are automatic, learned responses. They are a sign that the body and mind are struggling to cope with the trauma.



Avoidant

- Avoiding places, people, activities and conversations that remind person of combat
- Shutting down
- Restricting emotions
- High pain tolerance
- Loss of interest in daily activities
- Feeling disconnected from the world



Hyperarousal

- Hypervigilance
- Panic attacks
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irregular sleep patterns
- Irritability
- Exaggerated startle response



Combat PTSD Secondary Symptoms

- Domestic abuse
- Intimate partner violence
- Divorce
- Other family problems
- Suicide
- Change in parenting style
- Loss of spirituality
- Unemployment
- Homelessness
- Substance abuse
- **Problem gambling**



Pathological Gambling

Impulse Control Disorder

DSM IV Criteria:

1. Preoccupation
2. Tolerance
3. Withdrawal
4. Escape



5. Chasing
 6. Lying
 7. Loss of control
 8. Illegal acts
 9. Risked significant relationships
 10. Financial bailout
- **Problem Gamblers** meet 1 or more criteria
 - **Pathological Gamblers** meet 5 or more criteria



Problem Gambling in General Population

Prevalence

- Lifetime rate of Pathological Gambling: 1.5%
- Pathological Gambling in past year: .9%
- Lifetime rate of Problem Gambling: 3.9%
- Problem Gambling in past year: 2%

National Resource Council (1999). Pathological gambling: A critical review.



Problem Gambling in Military Populations

Prevalence

- Veterans receiving psychiatric treatment: 20%

Hierholzer (2010). Pathological gambling in combat veterans.

- Veterans receiving treatment for PTSD: 17% with a lifetime prevalence of 29%

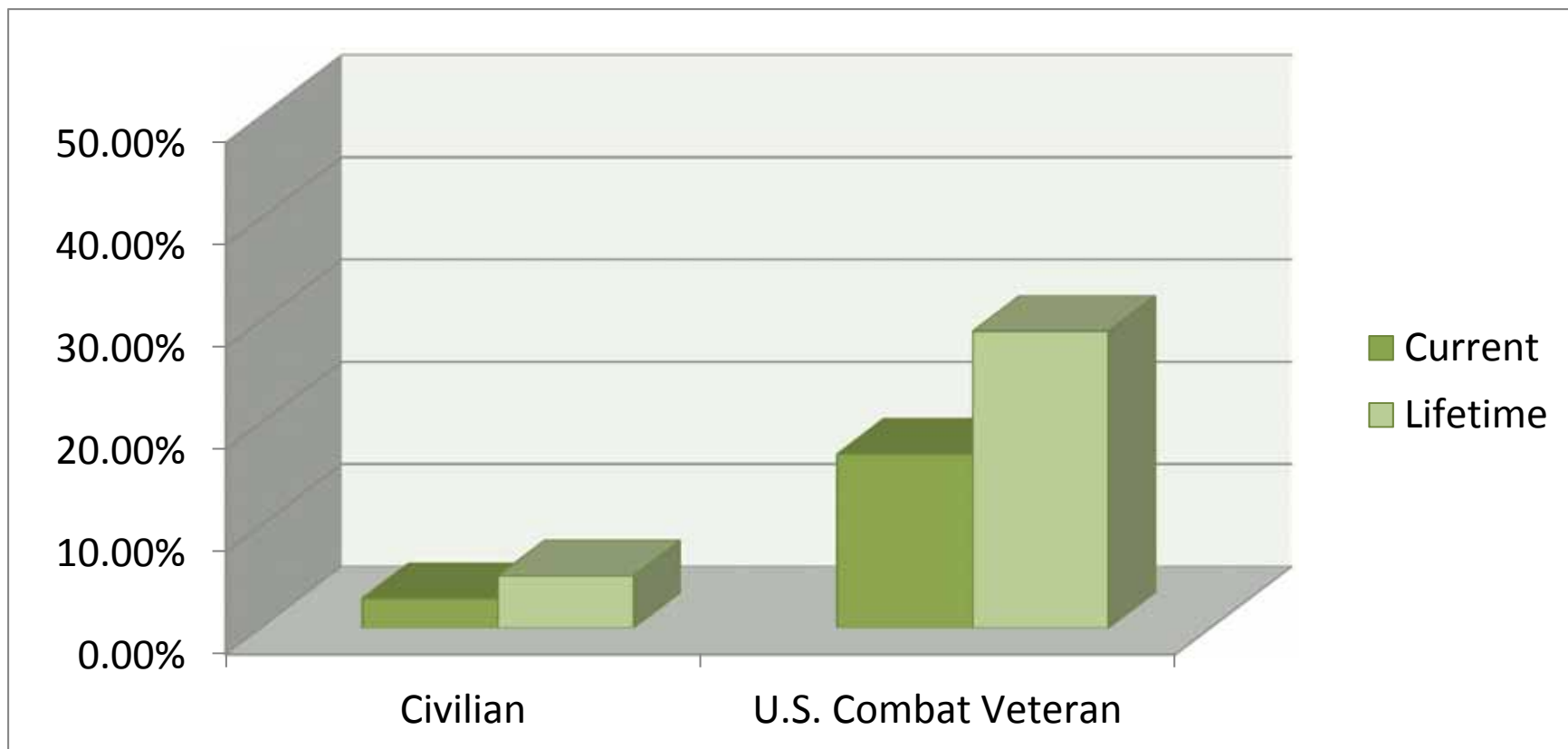
American Psychiatric Association 59th Institute on Psychiatric Services (2007).
Problematic gambling prevalent in US military veterans.

- 28% of veterans with PTSD met SOGS criteria for problem gambling, 17% met DSM IV criteria

Biddle D. et. al. (2005). Problem Gambling in Australian PTSD treatment-seeking veterans.



Problem Gambling Prevalence





Military Gambling Culture





Military Gambling Culture





Other Factors Worth Considering

- Commercial gambling availability
- Large sums of money (bonus & combat pay)
- Financial literacy & financial independence
- Risk-taking behaviors (invincibility)
- Adrenaline (combat)
- Support system
- **Untreated mental health problems**



How can we as professionals, as a community, as citizens provide combat veterans with the services they deserve?



Here's Where We Go-All-In

- **Prevention**
- Cultural competence and continued education
- Expand treatment options
- Increase screening for gambling problems
- Co-occurring disorders
- Reduce stigma



Resources

- www.realwarriors.net
- PTSD screening tools: www.ptsd.va.gov
- PG screening:
www.npgaw.org/tools/screeningtools.asp
- Military problem gambling toolkit:
www.gamblinghelp.org



Resources Cont.

- Military One Source (information and referrals): www.militaryonesource.com
- GA Meeting Directory:
www.gambersanonymous.org
- Gam-Anon: www.gam-anon.org



Resources Cont.

- Veterans Addictions Recover Center (Ohio)
Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center:
440-838-6075
- Veterans Hotline: 1-800-273-TALK



Military members in the room?





Thank You!

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