



Becoming an Armed Forces veteran-friendly GP practice



Dr Caroline Robertshaw BMedSci (Hons), MBChB, MRCGP LoC SDI LoC IUD
GP – Vernon Street and The Lanes Medical Centre , DE1 1FW

Introduction

- Veterans include anyone who has served for at least one day in the Armed Forces (Regular or Reserve) , most serve around 10 years
- Around 5% of the UK population are military veterans and have specific medical needs sometimes different from the general population
- Veterans may be reluctant to talk about their problems and may face difficulty getting the right help

Methodology

- We have a box on our new patient registration form asking about serving in the Armed forces
- This is then coded using the SNOMED code “Military Veteran”
- A clinical lead was appointed to undertake specific training and e-learning about ex-forces patients’ needs
- Practice wide education events about specific services for referral
- New display board area offering specific signposting for veterans
- Accurx practice-wide templates have been made by the clinical lead to ensure patients seen by other clinicians are signposting to the correct services

Objective

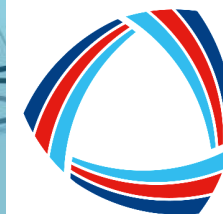
- RCGP has developed the ‘*Veteran Friendly GP Practice Accreditation Programme*’, which involves a process of accreditation where practices are required to meet the specified criteria and provide evidence that they are supportive of veterans’ healthcare. The aim is to improve the healthcare provided to veterans and their families by GPs working in primary healthcare.

Conclusion

- We now have a dedicated clinician who has specialist knowledge of military-related health conditions and veteran specific health services. Therefore, helping our ex-forces patients to receive the best care and treatment.

References

UK military veteran-friendly GP practices Simpson RG, Leach J. *BMJ Mil Health* 2021;0:1-3. doi:10.1136/bmjilitary-2020-001734. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmjilitary-2020-001734>



Armed Forces veteran friendly accredited GP practice

Becoming an Armed Forces veteran-friendly GP practice

Dr Caroline Robertshaw BMedSci (Hons), MBChB, MRCP LoC SDI LoC IUD
General Practitioner, Vernon Street and The Lanes Medical Centre , DE1 1FW

crobertshaw@nhs.net

Introduction

This poster presents a GP practice's journey to becoming a veteran-friendly practice. Veterans include anyone who has served for at least one day in the Armed Forces (Regular or Reserve). Most serve for around 10 years and around 5% of the UK population are military veterans who have specific medical needs sometimes different from the general population (Simpson and Leach, 2022). 52% of veterans have a long-term disability or illness, a higher percentage than that of the general population (32%) (Grant and Simpson, 2022).

Military veterans are often hesitant to seek help or discuss their problems, leading to them not always accessing available care, support, and treatments (Simpson and Leach, 2022). Veterans may believe that 'civilians,' including health professionals, do not understand a military culture or know about the available options for help and services (Simpson and Leach, 2022). These factors can contribute to veterans' difficulty in obtaining the appropriate help.

The Royal College of General Practitioners developed the '*Veteran Friendly GP Practice Accreditation Programme*', which involves a process of accreditation where practices are required to meet the specified criteria and provide evidence that they are supportive of veterans' healthcare. The aim is to improve the healthcare provided to veterans and their families by GPs working in primary healthcare.

References

Grant, V. B., & Simpson, R. G. (2022). Improving NHS primary care for military veterans. *British Journal of General Practice*, 72(716), 134-135.
Simpson, R. G., & Leach, J. (2022). UK military veteran-friendly GP practices. *BMJ Mil Health*, 168(1), 88-90
The Northern Hub for Veterans and Military Families Research (2019) Evidence based findings about the veteran population in England's East Midlands

Methodology

Partners of the practice expressed a desire to become a veteran-friendly practice in 2023. Initially, a member of staff undertook the RCGP veteran-friendly practice training. Following this, the practice introduced a box on its new patient registration form so that veterans and those currently serving could self-identify. This was then coded using the SNOMED code "Military Veteran".

A clinical lead was appointed to undertake specific training and e-learning about ex-forces patients' needs. The practice held all-team education events about specific services for referral. The clinical lead developed a new display board area offering specific signposting for veterans. The practice team have also designed Accurx practice-wide templates to ensure patients seen by other clinicians are signposting to the correct services.

Findings and Discussion

Being a veteran-friendly GP practice enables practices to deliver the best care for veterans. It also helps practices to meet the principles and commitments identified in the Armed Forces Covenant, which says that the armed forces community should not experience disadvantages when compared with non-service people.

There are around 3000 veterans of working age in Derby, and more than 11,000 living in Derbyshire, with around 1000 of pensionable age in Derby (Northern Hub for Veterans and Military Families Research, 2019). Many experience hardship, mental health difficulties, and lack of support. Being a veteran-friendly practice helps us to meet our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant, as well as contribute to promoting the health and wellbeing of veterans.

Conclusion

Our practice now has a dedicated clinician who has specialist knowledge of military-related health conditions and veteran-specific health services. Practice staff are now more knowledgeable about the needs of veterans. This, in turn, helps our ex-forces patients to receive the best care and treatment.



Armed Forces veteran friendly accredited GP practice