



NATIONAL COALITION *for* HOMELESS VETERANS

“Posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms, levels of social support, and emotional hiding in returning veterans”

Duax, J. M., Bohnert, K. M., Rauch, S. A., & Defever, A. M. / [Full Report](#)

Quick Takeaways:

- Greater social support was associated with less severe PTSD symptoms.
- Higher rates of emotional hiding were associated with higher rates of PTSD, even for veterans receiving social support.

Study:

734 OEF/OIF veterans at VISN 11 were surveyed between 2006 and 2009 in person or via telephone, of which 534 provided enough information to be analyzed. Veterans were surveyed on their perceived levels of social support, work and social adjustment, health problems and treatment utilization, rating their answers on a scale of 1-10. Social support included family, friends, and coworkers. Emotional hiding was defined as “efforts to withhold or avoid talking about their emotions and problems” with their social support structure.

PTSD status and severity was determined using the primary care PTSD screen (PC-PTSD) tool, which is less sensitive than the Clinician-Administered PTSD Scale. Veterans who indicated three or more symptoms on PC-PTSD were noted as being positive for PTSD.

Findings:

Researchers compared the rate of PTSD to an operationalized level of social support and an operationalized level of emotional hiding. Researchers controlled for various demographic factors, though noted that non-white veterans had a small increase in their rates of PTSD. Researchers found that for each additional unit of social support, PTSD rates decreased by 8%. For each additional unit of emotional hiding from immediate family and friends, PTSD rates increased by 44%, while each unit of emotional hiding from community and coworkers led to a 15-25% increase in rates of PTSD.

When controlling for emotional hiding, each additional unit of social support was associated with a 7% decrease in PTSD rates. When controlling for social support, each additional unit of emotional hiding was associated with a 31% increase in PTSD rates.

Conclusion:

Levels of social support and emotional hiding can affect rates of PTSD. Researchers recommend that when screening for and treating PTSD, service providers should address veterans’ perception of social support and work with veterans to address their needs for social and emotional disclosure.

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