

ABSTRACT

Background: Recently, the Army Suicide Event Reporting (ASER) and the Total Army Injury and Health Outcomes Database (TAIHOD) systems have indicated increasing rates of suicide among Active Army, Guard, and Reserve units over the last several years. Additionally, research has indicated that veterans are more than twice as likely to kill themselves as compared to the general population. There are limited evidence-based suicide prevention interventions that have been developed for military personnel and veterans who are experiencing suicide ideation or who have made a suicide attempt.

Objective/Hypothesis: The objective of this study is adapt and evaluate a brief, readily accessible, and personalized intervention, safety planning, that will reduce suicide risk in military and veteran populations in three ways by: (1) evaluating suicide risk using a structured assessment measure; (2) enhancing suicide-related coping strategies; and (3) increasing acceptability and initiation of appropriate mental health and substance use treatments. This proposal is unique in that the intervention, safety planning, will be evaluated in both military and VA settings, with the aim of disseminating related educational materials to both military and VA patients and providers.

Specific Aims: To evaluate the efficacy of the safety planning intervention on suicide ideation, suicide-related coping, and attitudes toward help seeking for hospitalized military personnel at high suicide risk. To evaluate the effectiveness of the safety planning intervention on suicide attempts, suicide ideation, attendance of outpatient mental health and substance abuse interventions, and suicide-related coping for veterans at high suicide risk in emergency department (ED) settings.

Study Design: Two separate, but related projects will be conducted to compare the study intervention with enhanced usual care conditions on suicide-related outcomes. In *Project 1*, the safety plan intervention will be specifically adapted for military service members who are at high risk for suicide. A randomized controlled trial will be conducted to determine the efficacy of the safety planning intervention for hospitalized military personnel at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Outcomes include suicide ideation, suicide-related coping, and attitudes toward help seeking at discharge and 1-month post discharge. In *Project 2*, a quasi-experimental design will be used to examine the effectiveness of the safety plan intervention for veterans at high suicide risk at VA ED. Outcomes include suicide attempts, suicide ideation, and suicide-related coping at 1, 3, and 6 months following the index ED visit as well as attendance at an outpatient mental health or substance abuse treatment appointment within 30 days post the index ED visit.

Relevance: If the safety plan intervention is determined to be effective, then this intervention may be widely and quickly disseminated in the DoD and VA settings through publications and presentations using in a variety of multi-media platforms. The ultimate goal of the safety plan dissemination initiative is to provide clinicians and other professionals who work with high risk military service members and veterans with a brief, easily administered intervention that is designed to mitigate suicide risk. **Background:** Recently, the Army Suicide Event Reporting (ASER) and the Total Army Injury and Health Outcomes Database (TAIHOD) systems have indicated increasing rates of suicide among Active Army, Guard, and Reserve units over the last several years. Additionally, research has indicated that veterans are more than twice as likely to kill themselves as compared to the general population. There are limited evidence-based suicide prevention interventions that have been developed for military personnel and veterans who are experiencing suicide ideation or who have made a suicide attempt.