HONORING VETERANS: A Special Project to Recognize the Needs of Vets

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Disclaimer

This project is not in any way associated with the We Honor Veterans program, a joint project of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and the Veterans Health Administration.

Mercy Medical Center Des Moines is not a part of the Veterans Health Administration.

The speaker is not employed by or affiliated in any way with the Veterans Health Administration.
Learning Objectives

• Participants will be able to identify three unique care needs of veterans in palliative or hospice care settings.
• Participants will learn at least three key strategies required to initiate and develop a “recognizing veterans” project in their local institution.
• Participants will be able to name three clinical benefits derived from a “recognizing veterans” project.
Introduction – “Why?”

- Documented increase in veterans accessing non-VA healthcare
- Increased need for hospice and palliative care among vets
- More complicated needs, higher incidence of chronic conditions
Other Motivations

• Anecdotal clinical benefits
• Societal and cultural impetus
• Personal interest
Preparation

- Nurse manager and LISW lead
- Research We Honor Veterans program
- Resource local hospice which had a program
- Dialog with veterans
- Resource local VA pal care social worker
- Collaboration with marketing dept. for July 4 kick off
- Extension of existing prayer blanket program
Mercy Medical Center wants to
Thank you for your service.
Recognition elements

- Ritual script
- Flag
- Certificate
- Blanket
- Pins?
Mercy Medical Center wants to
Thank-you for your service

Name:____________________
Branch:__________________
Date:____________________
Staff Training: specific needs and cultural considerations

- Staff meetings
- Handouts and resources
- Discipline-specific (i.e. Chaplain)
- Outreach to other depts.
Training Content

• Importance of honoring service
• Veteran culture
• Questions to ask
• Loss and grief needs
• Showing appreciation to families
• Other resources
Questions to Ask

• In which branch of the military did you serve?
• In which war era or period of service did you serve?
• How was your experience for you?
• Are you enrolled in VA?
Other Needs and Considerations

- Causes and indicators of depression
- Factors influencing post-traumatic stress disorder
- Spiritual support
- Veterans Crisis Line – 800.273.TALK(8255)
Outcomes and Benefits

- Better rapport – opens the door
- Increased self-esteem
- Enhanced clinical assessment
- Clarification of family/pt goals
- Memory making
- Additional opportunities to address resource needs
Family and Staff Benefits

- Thanking family members
- Opportunity for life review
- Job satisfaction, staff bonding
- Renewed meaning and purpose
- Increased awareness for PC program when other care providers invited to join in the recognition
Case Study #1

• 79 y/o male, metastatic prostate ca, CHF, pulmonary edema on pulmonary fibrosis, severe dyspnea
• Spouse not wanting to engage in adv. care planning- "that's not how our family functions" – barriers
• Patient opened up for the first time during veteran’s recognition. Allowed to talk about his experience.
• Subsequent encounters able to clarify patient desires for care closer to home, no mechanical ventilation, more open dialog
Case Study #2

- 78 y/o male, divorced, Adv.HF, limited social support
- MH h/o suicide attempts X 3, bipolar 1, depression
- Pacific Navy shipman Korean/Vietnam era, “dishonorable discharge due to unsuitability”
- Disobeyed orders for going ashore to see psychiatrist
- Contacted Veteran’s Affairs Commission for guidance to apply for upgrade to “general discharge under honorable conditions d/t inability to adapt”
Future Plans and Goals

- Palliative Care Month
- Military holiday observations
- Expanding hospital wide
- Adaptations
- Ritual
Additional Resources

Articles:


Williams, Jr., John. NCM. “Utilizing Evidence to Address the Health and Healthcare Needs of Veterans.”

Websites:
www.wehonorveterans.org
www.va.gov (search “Quality of Care” and “Mental Health”)
Palliative Care
Mercy Medical Center

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Thank you