



Evolving Health Needs of Veterans with Age; the Importance of Routine Health Needs Assessment

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Authors

Modirian E.^{1*} MD, MPH

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ABSTRACT

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¹Department of Emergency Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, Qazvin University of Medical Sciences, Qazvin, Iran

*Correspondence

Address: Department of Emergency Medicine, Booali Sina Teaching Center, Booali Sina Street, Qazvin, Iran. Postal Code: 34197-59811
Phone: +98 (28) 33332930
Fax: +98 (28) 33326033
ehsanmodirian@gmail.com

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Over three decades after the conclusion of the Iran-Iraq war, the physical and psychological conditions of veterans and survivors have undergone substantial changes as they age. Veterans, many of whom sustained significant physical and psychological trauma during the war, are now confronting the dual burden of war-related injuries and age-related health complications. Long-term effects of injuries such as musculoskeletal damage, amputations, and chemical exposure have been compounded by chronic conditions associated with aging, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cognitive decline. Additionally, psychological challenges such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and anxiety have evolved, with many veterans experiencing worsening mental health as they age. These factors have led to a decline in their quality of life and an increased need for medical and supportive services. Studies have emphasized that war veterans, compared to the general elderly population, require more comprehensive healthcare and age-related changes further exacerbate the challenges they face [1].

Veterans' health needs vary depending on the type and severity of their war-related injuries, and each group faces unique challenges as they age. For instance, veterans with physical impairments, such as limb amputations or mobility issues, will require increasing support with physical therapy and assistive devices over time. Veterans suffering from PTSD or other psychological conditions are at greater risk of developing cognitive impairments, depression, anxiety, or social isolation as they age. Aging can exacerbate the long-term effects of war trauma, further complicating their healthcare needs [2]. Moreover, age-related conditions such as hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, and diabetes are more prevalent among veterans compared to the general elderly population, making their health management increasingly complex. The overlap between aging and war-related disabilities compounds these issues, leading to a higher burden of care for both individuals and the healthcare system. Studies have shown that elderly veterans are at greater risk for chronic illnesses compared to the general aging population and often require long-term healthcare services [3].

Health needs assessments have long been a cornerstone in planning public health interventions, especially when applied to vulnerable populations like veterans. The value of conducting systematic health needs assessments lies in their ability to clearly understand current health problems, resources, and gaps in care. This approach enables

the identification of priority needs and ensures that healthcare services are aligned with the actual needs of the population. Evidence-based studies have demonstrated that accurate needs assessments can optimize healthcare resources and reduce medical costs. Such assessments are particularly crucial for aging veterans, whose needs evolve. Without precise, needs-based planning, healthcare resources may fail to meet their demands adequately. Regular health assessments among the elderly have been shown to improve service planning and enhance the quality of care. Furthermore, they contribute to better service distribution and increased efficiency within healthcare systems [4].

In conclusion, the aging veteran population requires urgent attention through comprehensive health needs assessments. As veterans' physical and psychological needs have changed significantly over time, these assessments are more critical than ever for ensuring that healthcare services adequately address their evolving requirements. Implementing health needs assessments will improve veterans' quality of life and inform policymakers on how to allocate healthcare resources effectively. Comprehensive and data-driven health plans based on needs assessments will improve veterans' care, addressing current and future challenges they face as they age [5].

It is hoped that by designing and implementing health needs assessments, decision-makers can allocate healthcare resources more effectively and develop comprehensive programs tailored to the real needs of the target population, ultimately improving the quality of life for these esteemed veterans.

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