ARMY
STARRS
Army Study to Assess Risk and Resilience in Service members

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National Institute of Mental Health
Jelinek, P., Army suicide rates at record high.  

Associated Press, 5/30/2008

The ultimate goal of this study is to develop data-driven methods for mitigating or preventing suicide behaviors and improving the overall mental health and behavioral functioning of Army Personnel during and after their Army service.

- Identify salient risk and protective factors
  - Genetic, neurobiological, cognitive features; social support, training experiences, cumulative stressors, triggering events

- Inform development of empirically-derived interventions
  - Target malleable risk/protective factors in intervention and prevention trials conducted in real world settings

- Deliver “actionable” findings rapidly
  - Interim data analyses, adaptive research design, iterative approach to signal detection and confirmation

Impact of Risk and Protective Factor Research on Heart Disease Mortality

- 63% decrease in mortality
- ~ 1 million premature deaths/year averted
- $2.6 trillion in economic return
- New, effective treatments and prevention strategies
Translational Epidemiology Research

Baseline Cross-Section
- Demographics
- Risk & Protective Factors

New Sample(s)

New Wave(s)

Trial

Policies & Practice

Signal

Hypotheses

Signal

Hypotheses

Signal

Hypotheses

Trial

NIMH Division of Services and Intervention Research, 8/14/2008
Cooperative Agreement Research Project (U01)

$50 million Total Costs for 5-year project period

Equal emphasis on risk and resilience factors related to suicidality and mental disorders, and behavioral health

Integration and coordination of efforts with relevant U.S. Army research and public health surveillance agencies

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**Army STARRS Overview**

- **Intervention**
  - U.S. Army Medical Research & Material Command (MRMC)

- **Surveillance**
  - U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine (CHPPM)

- **Risk Factor Identification**
  - Army Study to Assess Risk and Resilience in Service Members (Army STARRS)
Army STARRS Investigators

Robert Ursano, M.D., Principal Investigator
  • Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences

Ronald Kessler, Ph.D.
  • Harvard University

John Mann, M.D.
  • Columbia University

Steven Heeringa, Ph.D.
  • University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

U.S. Army and NIMH Scientists
  • U.S. Army Public Health Command (Provisional)
  • NIMH Division of Services and Intervention Research
Consortium Expertise

Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
Clinical and Military Risk Factor epidemiology

University of Michigan
Survey methodology, fieldwork and database generation

Harvard University
Psychiatric epidemiology
Designing and executing large population-based studies

Columbia University
Clinical/Neurobiological aspects of suicide
• Historical analysis of Soldiers with and without suicidal behavior since 2004 (using all data available on Active Duty Soldiers, 2004-2009)

• Representative sample of 90,000 Active Duty Soldiers, including mobilized Reserve and National Guard Soldiers, will be surveyed

• Census of new recruits in 2010, 2011, & 2012 (~80,000 – 120,000 Soldiers per year)

• Longitudinal follow-up of 15,000 Soldiers selected on the basis of particular risk/profile characteristics
Special Features

• Feedback loop between retrospective data analysis, case control studies, and prospective surveys

• Family-member and unit leadership informants to provide additional information about social and environmental context (culture/cohesion/stress)

• Evaluation of current and future Army suicide prevention and treatment interventions

• Exploration of potential neurobiological risk and protective factors
## Timeline and Deliverables

### Start Up Tasks
- 16 July 2009 →
  - Acquisition of civilian data (NCS-R)
  - Army weighting information (TAIHOD)
  - Data analysis and summary

### Initiation of Data Collection (2010)
- **Dec**
  - Analysis of Civilian Data
- **Jan**
  - Analysis of Army Administrative Data (February 2010)
- **Feb**
  - All Army Surveys (April 2010)
- **Mar**
  - Case Control Studies (June 2010)
- **Apr**
  - Reception Week Surveys (September 2010)
- **May**
  - Coordination with MHAT-VII (Spring 2010)
- **Jun**
  - In-Theatre Surveillance (October 2010)
- **Jul**
  - Longitudinal Follow-Up Surveys (October 2010)

### Interim Analyses
- 30-Nov-2009
- 15-May-2010
- 15-Aug-2010
- 15-Feb-2011
- Fall 2010
- 15-Feb-2011

*9 Dec 09*
Army Study to Assess Risk and Resilience in Service Members (Army STARRS): A Partnership Between NIMH and the U.S. Army

The Army Study to Assess Risk and Resilience in Service Members (Army STARRS) is the largest study of suicide and mental health among military personnel ever undertaken. Army STARRS will identify — as rapidly as possible — modifiable risk and protective factors related to mental health and suicide. It also will support the Army’s ongoing efforts to prevent suicide and improve soldiers’ overall wellbeing.

Beginning in 2001, the suicide rate among soldiers rose significantly, reaching record levels in 2007 and again in 2008 despite the Army’s major prevention and intervention efforts. In response, the Army and NIMH partnered to develop and implement STARRS, with Army funding. More>>

View the Warning Signs of Suicide

For More Information:
- Questions and Answers on Army STARRS
- The NIMH Director’s Statement on the Tragedy at Fort Hood
- Veterans Crisis Intervention Team
- The Pentagon’s Armed with Science interview with Dr. Robert Weisner, November 18, 2009, Episode 44 and transcript

Press releases and updates

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) has announced that an interdisciplinary team of four research institutions will carry out the largest study of suicide and mental health among military personnel ever undertaken, with $50 million in funding from the U.S. Army. More>>

NIMH and the U.S. Army have entered into a memorandum of agreement (MOA) to conduct research that will help the Army reduce the rate of suicides. NIMH Director Thomas R. Insel, M.D., Army Secretary Pete Geren, and Army Chief of Staff Gen. George W. Casey Jr. signed the MOA on October 23, 2008. More>>

www.NIMH.NIH.GOV/ArmySTARRS
Questions?
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