

Community Veterans' Decision to Use VA Services: A Multimethod Veteran Health Partnership Study

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What Is the Purpose of This Study/Review?

- To develop a more nuanced understanding of why some veterans choose not to use Veterans Health Administration (VHA) medical care.
- To demonstrate the potential utility of a community partnered approach to collecting data relevant to VHA utilization choices.

What Is the Problem?

- Although many medically needy veterans lack ready healthcare alternatives, some choose not to use available VHA services.

What Are the Findings?

- A community partnered approach allowed hard-to-reach veterans to participate in the survey. They offered unique insights into barriers that were important to their decision to not use VHA.
- These reasons for not using VHA are not well-documented in prior national surveys of VHA use.

Who Should Care Most?

- VHA leaders and public policy makers should be aware that although geographic accessibility and timeliness of care are commonly recognized barriers, other factors are important barriers to small but important subsets of the veteran population.
- Researchers should be aware of the value of community partnered approaches for survey research.

Recommendations for Action

- Researchers should foster the inclusion of a wider range of voices in public policy research by partnering with organizations with links to underserved communities.
- VHA policy makers should trial a variety of approaches to overcoming mistrust of the VHA health system by important subgroups of veterans who lack access to healthcare they can trust, despite having access to VHA services and the literature supporting the quality of VHA health care services.
- Future research should approach the issue of veteran utilization decisions using a broader range of methodological and theoretical frameworks to develop a robust understanding of real and perceived barriers to VHA health care.