

High rates of substance abuse exist among veterans with mental illness

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A new study published in *The American Journal on Addictions* reveals that Veterans who suffer from mental health disorders also have high rates of substance use disorders.

Led by Ismene Petrakis, MD, of Yale University School of Medicine, researchers used national administrative data from the Department of Veterans Affairs to examine rates of [substance use](#) disorders among Veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan who were also diagnosed with PTSD and other [psychiatric disorders](#).

A total of 1,001,996 VA patients were diagnosed with one of the six designated mental disorders. The rates of substance use disorders among those with mental illness ranged from 21-35%.

Results show that there were high rates of substance use disorders found among veterans with mental illness, with the highest rates of substance abuse occurring among those with bipolar disorder and [schizophrenia](#).

"Our findings may be useful in program planning and for understanding the needs of veterans of different eras," Petrakis notes. "For example, in determining the needs of veterans from the current conflicts, it seems that those with serious [mental illness](#) are particularly in need of services to address a comorbid substance use disorder."

Provided by Wiley

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