Many female veterans troubled by history of sexual assault

September 24 2019

More than one in 10 older female veterans experienced sexual assault

while on active duty, a new study shows.

Doctors "caring for older women veterans should recognize the prevalence and importance of [military sexual trauma] when assessing patients' health concerns," said study author Dr. Carolyn Gibson.

Gibson is with the San Francisco VA Health Care System. Her team notes that mandatory screening for military sexual trauma was launched in 2003, and the results indicate the issue has touched the lives of about 1 in 4 female vets.

But given that most of the veterans screened were relatively young, Gibson and her team set out to conduct screening focused solely on postmenopausal vets.

They found that 13% of older vets reported that they, too, had been the victim of military sexual trauma.

Such trauma, said Gibson, was also "strongly associated" with a risk for depression, thoughts of suicide, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). A higher risk for sleep trouble and chronic pain was also seen.

Dr. Stephanie Faubion is medical director of the North American Menopause Society (NAMS). The findings "underscore the importance of trauma screening regardless of a woman's age," she said in a NAMS news release.

Gibson and her colleagues plan to present their findings Tuesday in Chicago at a meeting of the North American Menopause Society.

  More information: There's more on military sexual trauma at U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs .

Citation: Many female veterans troubled by history of sexual assault (2019, September 24) retrieved 4 May 2024 from https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-09-female-veterans-history-sexual-assault.html