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Trained, peer mentorship and veteran support organization membership to assist transitioning veterans: A multi-arm, parallel randomized controlled trial

Joseph Geraci¹, Michael Geraci², Caroline Angel³ and George Bonanno¹

¹Columbia University, USA

²Don Bosco Prep, USA

³Cambridge University, UK

Some veterans who recently served in the military report significant psychological problems based on their experiences in the military. Stressors that these veterans face when they transition out of the military can exacerbate these problems and negatively impact their long-term physical and psychological well-being. We are executing a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to evaluate the efficacy of providing Veterans who are transitioning back into their civilian communities trained, peer mentorship (Pro Vetus) and membership in a Veteran Support Organization (VSO- team red, white, and blue) to improve social support and quality of life, as well as reduce transition stressors, psychological and physical concerns. 219 recent veterans who transitioned out of the military since 2002 and reside in New York City were randomized controlled trial methodology randomized to one of three study arms (Team red, white and blue membership plus trained, peer ProVetus mentorship; team red, white, and blue membership; and waitlist control). Intent-to-treat analysis will compare changes in social support, quality of life and transition stressors (proximal measures) as well as psychological and physical health (distal measures). Enrolment for the veterans occurred from August 2014 to March 2016. Veterans completed a baseline survey with three follow-up surveys post baseline (4, 10, and 16 months). The veterans in the first arm were assigned to mentors who completed a 20 hour certification training program offered by the Resilience Center for Veterans and Families at Teachers College, Columbia University. Team red, white, and blue is a veteran service organization that offers veterans an informal network organization in which veterans participate in physical fitness activities and other activities that benefit the greater community.

Biography

Joseph Geraci is a licensed Mental Health Counsellor, the Director of Military Relations and Co-Founder of the Teachers College (Columbia U) Resilience Center for Veterans and Families, and a Lieutenant Colonel (Infantry) in the United States Army. As an Infantry Officer, he has deployed to Afghanistan with the 2nd Ranger Battalion, 173rd Airborne Brigade, and 10th Mountain Division. As an Assistant Professor, he instructed and mentored cadets at the United States Military Academy. As a mental health Counsellor, he has provided psychotherapy for veterans, emergency service personnel and their families. He graduates from Columbia University in May 2018 with a PhD in clinical psychology and focuses his research on innovative interventions that assists veterans to successfully transitioning into their communities.

jcg2123@tc.columbia.edu

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