

Are transgender veterans at greater risk of suicide?

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Veterans of the U.S. armed forces who have received a diagnosis consistent with transgender status are more likely to have serious suicidal thoughts and plans and to attempt suicide. A new study shows that this group has a higher risk of suicide death than the general population of

veterans, as described in an article in *LGBT Health*.

Based on data gathered from the VA National Patient Care Database from 2000-2009, John Blosnich, PhD, MPH and coauthors from VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System and University of Pittsburgh (PA), University of Rochester (NY), VA Central Office (Washington, DC), East Tennessee State University (Johnson City, TN), and VISN2 Center of Excellence for Suicide Prevention (Canandaigua, NY), determined that while the suicide death rate among [veterans](#) with transgender-related diagnoses was higher than for veterans in general, it was similar to the suicide death rate for veterans with serious mental illness such as depression or schizophrenia.

The authors report their findings in the article "[Mortality among Veterans with Transgender-Related Diagnoses in the Veterans Health Administration, FY2000-2009](#)."

"Although this study suggests comparably elevated rates of suicide among veterans with transgender-related ICD-9-CM diagnoses and veterans with any psychiatric diagnosis, suicides among transgender veterans occurred at a younger age, resulting in greater potential years of life lost," says *LGBT Health* Editor-in-Chief William Byne, MD, PhD, James J. Peters VA Medical Center, Bronx, NY and Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, NY. "VA has a multifaceted strategy to reduce suicide among veterans. Its commitment in 2011, and reaffirmed in 2013, to provide respectful transgender-specific healthcare as well staff training in transgender cultural awareness and sensitivity may also address the high suicide rate among transgender veterans."

More information: The article is available free on the *LGBT Health* [website](#) until January 16, 2015.

Provided by Mary Ann Liebert, Inc

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