University of Southern California
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INFORMED CONSENT FOR RESEARCH

Study Title: Exploring the Experience of Veterans and their Families and Veteran Care Providers During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Principal Investigator: Carl Castro, Ph.D., Professor of Social Work and Psychology
Colonel, U.S. Army (Retired)

Department: Social Work

INTRODUCTION

We invite you to take part in a research study. Please take as much time as you need to read the consent form. You may want to discuss it with your family, friends, or your personal doctor. If you find any of the language difficult to understand, please ask questions.

KEY INFORMATION

The following is a short summary of this study to help you decide whether you should participate. More detailed information is listed later in this form.

1. Being in this research study is voluntary–it is your choice.

2. You are being asked to take part in this study because you are a veteran who previously completed a survey from the University of Southern California Center for Innovation and Research on Veterans and Military Families and agreed to be contacted for future research participant opportunities OR because you are a veteran, the family member of a veteran, or the parent of a child of a veteran, who is receiving care from Cohen Veterans Network. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of COVID-19 on the well-being of veterans and their family members as well as the experience of utilizing telehealth service for those receiving care. Your participation in this study will last approximately 20 minutes. Procedures will include completing an online survey.

3. There are risks from participating in this study. The most common risk is feeling uncomfortable or uneasy answering questions. There is also a small risk people not connected with the study will learn of your participation. More detailed information about the risks of this study can be found under the “Risk and Discomfort” section.

4. There are no direct benefits from taking part in this study. However, your participation may help us learn how to provide support to veterans during this time. You may feel positively about contributing to the advancement of knowledge.

5. If you decide not to participate in this research, your only choice is to not participate. There are no alternatives to participation.

DETAILED INFORMATION

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of COVID-19 on the well-being of veterans and their family members. This study will also explore the experience of veterans and their families who are receiving care through telehealth services due to the social restrictions of COVID-19. We hope to learn how veterans are doing during the COVID-19 pandemic, what needs may no longer being met, and when applicable, how satisfied veterans and their family members are with receiving care through telehealth.

You are invited as a possible participant because you are a veteran who previously completed a survey from the University of Southern California Center for Innovation and Research on Veterans and Military Families and agreed to be contacted for future research participant opportunities OR because you are a veteran, the family member of a veteran, or the parent of a child of a veteran, who is receiving care from Cohen Veterans Network. About 3000 participants will take part in the study.

PROCEDURES

If you decide to take part, this is what will happen.

You have received an invitation email to participate in this study. To participate, you will click on the survey link which will take you to the online survey. You will be provided this information sheet again at the start of the survey. Should you agree to continue, you will click, begin survey.

Participation in the study involves completing a 20-minute online survey. The survey asks questions about your background (examples, age and education), your well-being (examples, how you are feeling emotionally and your sleep), your behaviors and needs during the COVID-19 pandemic, (examples, what services you no longer have access to and are you practicing social distancing), and if you are receiving care through telehealth, your satisfaction with those services.

If you are a parent of a veteran connected child, you will be asked to answer these questions about your child.

You will have the option to skip any questions you do not want to answer. At the end of the survey, you will be asked if the study team may contact you again in three months for a follow up. If you agree, you will be asked to provide an email address where the study team may reach you. Your email address will not be shared with anyone, and you will only be contacted regarding the study follow up.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

Possible risks and discomforts you could experience during this study include feeling uncomfortable or uneasy answering certain questions and a small risk individual not associated with the study may learn of your participation.

Surveys/Questionnaires/Interviews: Some of the questions may make you feel uneasy or embarrassed. You can choose to skip or stop answering any questions you don't want to.

Breach of Confidentiality: There is a small risk that people who are not connected with this study will learn your identity or your personal information.

BENEFITS

There are no direct benefits from taking part in this study. However, your participation may help us learn how to provide support to veterans during this time. You may feel positively about contributing to the advancement of knowledge.

PRIVACY/CONFIDENTIALITY

We will keep your records for this study confidential as far as permitted by law. However, if we are required to do so by law, we will disclose confidential information about you. Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including research study and medical records, to people who are required to review this information. We may publish the information from this study in journals or present it at meetings. If we do, we will not use your name.

The University of Southern California's Institutional Review Board (IRB) may review your records

All data will be stored in a locked office and/or password protected computer. All personal information will be removed from data prior to analysis. You will not be asked to provide your name. However, you will be offered an opportunity to provide your email address for a follow up survey. An arbitrary participant number will be assigned to each participant and this code will be used in the data set for analysis. Records related to follow up surveys will be stored in a separate file from the study responses, on a password protected encrypted computer. The identifiers will be kept for future use so we may contact you for the follow-up survey. We will only contact you with your permission.

The remaining data will be maintained indefinitely and may be used in future research studies; if you do not want your data used in future studies, you should not participate in this study. Your information is collected as part of this research will be used or distributed for future research studies without your additional informed consent. No information that identifies you will be shared with others.

Only the USC study team will have access to your records of your participation and the records of who participated in the study will not be shared. All records for this study will remain confidential as far as permitted by law.

ALTERNATIVES

An alternative would be not to take part in this study.

PAYMENTS

You will not be compensated for your participation in this research.

COST

There are no costs related to participation in this research.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

It is your choice whether to participate. If you choose to participate, you may change your mind and leave the study at any time. Refusal to participate or stopping your participation will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you stop being in the research, already collected data may not be removed from the study database. You will be asked whether the investigator can continue to collect data from your records. If you agree, this data will be handled the same as the research data. No new information will be collected about you or from you by the study team without your permission.

The study site may still, after your withdrawal, need to report any safety event that you may have experienced due to your participation to all entities involved in the study. Your personal information, including any identifiable information, that has already been collected up to the time of your withdrawal will be kept and used to guarantee the integrity of the study, to determine the safety effects, and to satisfy any legal or regulatory requirements.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions, concerns, complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to the study investigator, please contact Carl Castro, Ph.D., cacastro@usc.edu, 213.821.3623.

This research has been reviewed by the USC Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB is a research review board that reviews and monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research participants. Contact the IRB if you have questions

about your rights as a research participant or you have complaints about the research. You may contact the IRB at (323) 442-0114 or by email at irb@usc.edu.