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### Learning Objective

Understand the magnitude of the need for expert veteran care;	Develop talking points to start the conversation about military service;
Area of Operations and the challenges, triumphs, and trials that come with each;	Special considerations, pearls and observations from the field.

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### Demographics

- Over 37% of the veteran population is 65 years old or older, compared with 13% of the general population. (9.5 million)
- 65+ decrease 9% from 9.3 million to 8.5 million.
- 75+ increase 12% from 4 million to 4.5 million
- 85+ triple from 422 thousand to 1.3 million
- 65 to 84 have increased between 2010 and 2015 as the Korean Conflict and Vietnam era cohorts aged.

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### Veterans at the end of life

- 54,000 American veterans die each month and account for one quarter of all US deaths.
- Inquiring about military service has both practical and therapeutic benefits.
- Military service can be a core experience in defining the way veterans live and the way they die.
- Knowing the components of a military history can be a useful tool in bridging the silence that often surrounds the war experience and can act as a catalyst for discussions about end of life preferences.
- Polite inquiry about military service is a good way to create an atmosphere of respect. It helps to know about the service and about the conflict.

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### Questions to ask

- **Starting Questions**
- *Are you a veteran?*
- *Tell me about your military experience*
- *What did you do in the military?*
- *When and where did you serve?*
- *What branch of the military were you in?*
- *How has it affected you?*

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### Discussing military experience

- **Detailed questions**
- *What was your rank?*
- *Did you see combat or were you in a combat area?*  
*Did you see enemy fire or casualties?*
- *Were you a prisoner of war?*
- *Were you wounded or hospitalized?*
- *Do you currently receive care at a VA?*
- *Do you have a service-connected condition? If not, are you enrolled?*

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### Discussing military experience

- Do you think you were changed as a result of being in the military? Please describe the changes.
- Do you think your experiences in the military are affecting you today?
- Is there anything about your experiences in the military that is still troubling you today?
- How are you sleeping at night?
- Do you have nightmares about the war?

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### Discussing military experience

- What was your homecoming like? Is there anything about your homecoming that is still troubling you today? (*Think about the different era's and how each one was welcome home*).
- Do you think your experiences in the military and your homecoming affected your relationships with family and friends when you returned?
- Do you keep in touch with your war buddies?
- Do you think your military experiences are influencing the way you are now coping with your illness?

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### War Specific Concerns

- WWII
- Korea
- Vietnam




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### WWII

- POW's
- Nationalities involved in conflict
  - Asian (Japanese)
  - Western European (German)
  - Jews
- Types of injuries
  - Cold Injuries
  - Nuclear Exposure (Testing and Cleanup)
  - Exposure to chemical weapons




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### Important Dates



- Sept 1<sup>st</sup> 1939, Germany Invades Poland
- Dec 7<sup>th</sup> 1941, Pearl Harbor
- June 6<sup>th</sup> 1944, Operation Overlord-Allied invasion of Normandy
- Dec 16<sup>th</sup> 1944, Start of Battle of the Bulge, **Ardennes Forest**

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### Important Dates

- Jan 16<sup>th</sup> 1945, End of Battle of the Bulge
- Feb 19<sup>th</sup> 1945, Iwo Jima
- April 1<sup>st</sup> 1945, Okinawa




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### Important topics

- The Holocaust
- Auschwitz II (Auschwitz-Birkenau) 1.1 million
- Treblinka 800,000
- Jewish survivors will still have tattoos
- "I look like one of them"




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### Important topics

- D-Day, Normandy, Utah and Omaha Beach
- Pearl Harbor
- Iwo Jima
- Nagasaki (Little Boy) and Hiroshima (Fat Man)
- Enola Gay

[Omaha Beach Saving Private Ryan](#)

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- African Campaigns
- Mediterranean Theatre
- Eastern And Western European fronts




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## Korea

- "The forgotten war"
  - This is why I want to spend some time introducing you to it
- POW
- Battle Fatigue
- Nationalities involved in conflict
  - Asian (Korean, Chinese)
- Types of injuries
  - Cold Injuries
  - Nuclear Exposure (Testing and Cleanup)

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## Important Dates

- Aug 15<sup>th</sup> 1945 Korea divided into US and Soviet occupation zones along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel
- June 25<sup>th</sup> 1950 North Korea invades South Korea, 3 days later the North captures Seoul




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### Important Dates

- July 5<sup>th</sup> 1950 the battle of Osan
- August to September 1950 Pusan Perimeter
- September 15<sup>th</sup> 1950 Battle of Incheon cut the peninsula in half and stopped resupply of north Korean soldiers fighting further south




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### Important Dates

- In 6 months the battle extended from the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel to southern coasts and back again
- October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1950 China entered the war after ROK soldiers crossed the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel headed north.
- By November 1950 the battle neared the southern boarder of China

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### Important Dates

- July 1951 to July 1953 the battle stagnated near the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel
- The 38<sup>th</sup> parallel is known as the Korean Demilitarized zone (DMZ)




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### Korean War Veteran, Military Checklist

**MILITARY CHECKLIST**

NAME: Yan, HASEN, LUISA  
 SERVICE NO.: WAL 10786 AND BRAC ID #3101  
 COMMAND: SON 1

**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Did you ever receive a discharge?  Yes  No  
 If yes, was it an honorable discharge?  Yes  No  
 If yes, what was the reason for discharge? SON 1

**DISPATCH INFORMATION**

Did you ever receive a discharge?  Yes  No  
 If yes, was it an honorable discharge?  Yes  No  
 If yes, what was the reason for discharge? DIS. NOT MANY TO DISCUSS.

**VETERAN STATUS INFORMATION**

Did you ever serve in the military?  Yes  No  
 If yes, was it in the military?  Yes  No  
 Did your service include combat, dangerous or traumatic assignments?  Yes  No  
 Do you have a copy of your DD214 discharge papers?  Yes  No  
 Did you ever serve on active duty?  Yes  No  
 Do you have any immediate family members that served or are serving in the military?  Yes  No  
 Comments: SON 1

**MILITARY BACKGROUND**

In which branch of the military did you serve?  Army  Navy  Air Force  Marines  Coast Guard  
 Bureau of Naval Ordnance  National Harbor (NOR)  Other \_\_\_\_\_  
 In which war or period of service did you serve?  
 WWI (1914-1918)  Vietnam (1955-1975)  Korea (1950-1953)  Other \_\_\_\_\_  
 WWII (1941-1945)  Vietnam (1955-1975)  Afghanistan (2001-2021)  Other \_\_\_\_\_  
 Dates: Mar 1950 - Mar 1951 (over 24 months continuous service, or the full period for which they were called or ordered to active duty)  
 (Check how long you were your experience in the Military) DIS. NOT MANY TO DISCUSS.  
 Would you like to be interviewed about your military history?  
 Yes  No  
 If available, would you like your topic confirmed to have military experience?  
 Yes  No

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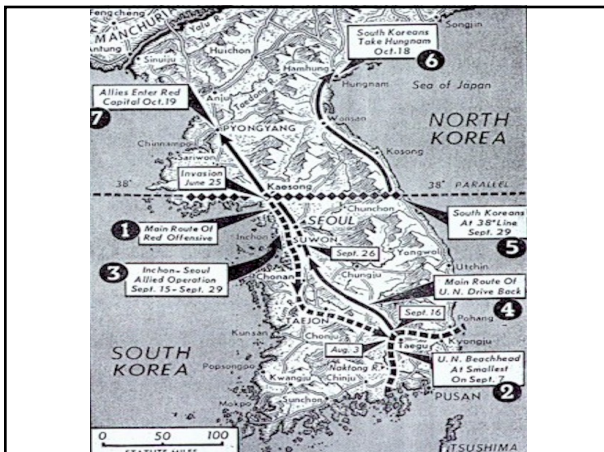
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## Korea

- When were you in Korea?  
June 1950
- Wait... June 1950 that was the start of the war, where were you?  
Osan
- How long did it take you to get to the safety of the Pusan Perimeter?  
???
- Where did you go from Pusan?  
Inchon
- Wow... You are Army Infantry and they put you on an amphibious landing?  
???
- What rank were you?  
Sargent First Class
- Did you run a platoon?  
Yes sir... 42 of the finest individuals I ever met.
- How was your platoon leader?  
Better than most!
- How many of the 42 did you bring home?  
...23 of us made it home, but I only lasted until Imjin when the Chinese rolled us up! lost 10 guys as POW....
- Did you get them back?  
Yes after the war.
- Was Imjin where you received the purple heart?  
Yes.
- If you were at Imjin you went through the winter of 51, how cold was that?  
We froze our asses off, is that when the neuropathy started... "how did you know," I lived that cold brother with full cold weather gear and a tank to sleep in, I can't imagine how cold you were.

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## Vietnam

- POW
- PTSD
- Home Coming
- Support at home
- Nationalities involved in conflict
  - Asian (Vietnamese, Cambodian, Thai, Laotian)
- Types of injuries
  - Agent Orange Exposure
  - Hepatitis C
  - Torture (John McCain)

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## Important verbiage/dates

- Stated purpose was to prevent the spread of Communism
- Sept 26<sup>th</sup>, 1959-April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1975
- Area of Operations (AO) Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia




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- Viet Cong-Guerrilla war
- North Vietnamese Army-Conventional war
- Tet Offensive January 31, 1968

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### Important verbiage/dates

- Ho Chi Minh trail
- Hanoi
- Tonkin Gulf
- Frog Men
- CIA special activities division

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### Important verbiage/dates

- Intro of one year tour of duty
- My Lai Massacre
- Hamburger Hill 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne
- Ia Drang Valley (*We were soldiers once and young*)
- Fall of Saigon

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Use clues around the patient's home to obtain information about the veteran's service.

**Shadow boxes** give significant insight into a veteran's career.

**You may see:**

- Medals
- Pins
- Patches
- Awards

Understanding the meaning of these medals leads great conversation.

 Two shadow boxes are shown, one on the left and one on the right. Each box is filled with various military medals, ribbons, and pins. The boxes are mounted on a wall.

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"What do I see?"

Purple Heart

3-1 Unit Patch

1st Marine Division

Vietnam Service Medals

Combat Action Ribbons/Badges

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**Special Considerations**

Restraints	Hep C	PTSD
ETOH	Increased Suicide Risk	Psycho-Social issues

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**Restraining a Veteran**

Consider the environments situations	Is a show of force the best answer? • Don't forget the fight or flight response	Is 2 or 4 point restraint the best answer?
Are bed rails appropriate?	Backing someone into a corner	Medicate first allow the medications to help

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**PTS (Post Traumatic Stress)**

- In your life, have you ever had an experience so frightening, horrible, or upsetting that, in the past month, you...
- Have had nightmares about it or thought about it when you did not want to?
- Tried hard not to think about it or went out of your way to avoid situations that reminded you of it?
- Were constantly on guard, watchful, or easily startled?
- Felt numb or detached from others, activities, or your surroundings?
- Not everyone that has been in combat will have PTSD but they may still have some of these symptoms.

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### Warning Signs of PTS

- **PHYSICAL SIGNS**
- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Muscle tremors
- Twitches
- \* Chest pain
- \* Difficulty breathing
- Elevated BP
- Rapid heart rate
- Thirst
- Visual difficulties
- Vomiting
- Grinding of teeth
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Profuse sweating
- Chills
- \* Shock symptoms
- Fainting
- **COGNITIVE SIGNS**
- Blaming someone
- Confusion
- Poor attention
- Poor decisions
- Heightened or lowered alertness
- Poor concentration
- Memory problems
- Hypervigilance
- Difficulty identifying familiar objects or people
- Increased or decreased awareness of surroundings
- Poor problem solving
- Poor abstract thinking
- Loss of time, place, or person orientation
- Disturbed thinking
- Nightmares
- Intrusive images

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### Warning Signs of PTS

- **EMOTIONAL SIGNS**
- Anxiety
- Guilt
- Grief
- Denial
- Severe panic (rare)
- Emotional shock
- Fear
- Uncertainty
- Loss of emotional control
- Depression
- Inappropriate emotional response
- Apprehension
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Intense anger
- Irritability
- Agitation
- **BEHAVIORAL SIGNS**
- Change in activity
- Change in speech patterns
- Withdrawal
- Emotional outbursts
- Suspiciousness
- Change in usual communications
- Loss or increase of appetite
- Alcohol consumption
- Inability to rest
- Antisocial acts
- Nonspecific bodily complaints
- Hyperalert to environment
- Startle reflex intensified
- Pacing
- Erratic movements
- Change in sexual functioning

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### DREAMS

- A Mnemonic for Screening Patients for Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
- **Detachment**
- **Re-experiencing the event**
- **Event had emotional effects**
- **Avoidance**
- **Month in duration**
- **Sympathetic hyperactivity or hypervigilance**

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### Tips on Caring for a Vet with PTSD

- Allow them as your care provides to adjust their environment
- Know and avoid triggers if possible
- No solitary thing will help, they need patient education, pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy

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### ETOH risk

- Sleep disorder
- Interest
- Guilt
- Energy
- Concentration difficulties
- Appetite
- Psychomotor agitation or irritation (remember this)
- Suicide-Tell me about suicide, who is at risk

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### Suicide

- American Indian and Alaska Natives — 14.3 per 100,000
- Non-Hispanic Whites — 13.5 per 100,000
- Non-Hispanic white men age 85 or older had an even higher rate, with 47 suicide deaths per 100,000.
- Just under six times as many males as females
- Firearms, suffocation, and poison are by far the most common methods of suicide, overall. However, men and women differ in the method used, as shown below

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### Psycho-Social

- The demographics of veterans dying in the VA system: higher degree of social isolation, lack of family support, or low income. We see this a lot in home situations
- The veteran’s experience with military culture and the camaraderie of other veterans
- A culture of stoicism that might prevent veterans from admitting to being in pain, or from asking for pain medication. This fact can interfere with more than just pain management

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### Take Home Points

- The causes of terminal agitation, which may be related to PTSD or to disease-related terminal restlessness
- Consider what someone with PTSD and Alzheimer’s disease may experience; hallucination, illusions, dreams, anxiety, delirium
- Most dying people resist physical and chemical restraints—but for dying veterans, such restraints may be even more overwhelming
- The possibility of paradoxical reactions to medications or subtherapeutic effect

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### Pearls

- There is a difference between a Marine and an Airman
- Veterans are the best patients in the world
- We look out for each other and we take care of each other
  - Take advantage of that in your care, enlist them in your care if clinically viable, need a volunteer - ask their room mate
- Put two combat vets in the same room and they will forget about their pain or at least they will be laughing about it by the end of the day.

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### Pearls

- Everyone is different
- Some might not “take pride in their service”
- Others take great pride in their service
- A “thank you” can go along way.

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### Observations from the field

- A Marine gunny sergeant will live a lot longer with liver failure than a couch potato
- The cranky/crabby vets will be the ones you remember the rest of your life, because when you make their day just a little bit better they will be eternally grateful even if they don't tell you.
- We find that many Veterans will share combat experiences and/or fears with our hospice team that they have never shared with family

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### You Can Make A Difference

- *“There may be extensive existential questions, and providing opportunities during follow-up visits for team members to explore these has a great deal of value. Understanding how veterans view their service, whether it is positive or negative, has implications for how they view their disease, especially if it is related to their service.”*

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Resources

- Multiple sources found on:
  - [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)
  - [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)
  - [www.nhpco.org/veterans](http://www.nhpco.org/veterans)
  - <http://www.wehonorveterans.org/>
- Appendix A: Military facts for non-military social workers
- Primary Care treatment of PTSD.  
<http://www.aafp.org/afp/20000901/1035.html>
- Data and facts of this presentation are found on various VA and NHCPO websites.

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