



Featured VITAS Expert

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CE Webinar for Healthcare Professionals

Veterans Nearing the End of Life: Distinct Needs, Specialized Care

GOAL: To equip healthcare professionals with an understanding of military veterans' unique medical, emotional, and spiritual needs as they near the end of life. Attendees explore the elements that support veteran-specific cultural competency in non-VA healthcare facilities. Topics include PTSD, the concept of moral or "soul" injury, military cultural values and their impact on help-seeking behaviors, and factors that influence veterans' military-to-civilian transitions.

Key Takeaways:

1. Many factors can influence the end-of-life journey for veterans. Among them: when and where veterans served, whether they were injured/imprisoned or experienced war-related trauma, how they adjusted from military to civilian life, and the impact of military cultural values on their ability to cope with stress and seek help. Other factors include a veteran's experiences with PTSD, guilt, exposure to chemical/biological warfare, and public reaction to the war or conflict during their time of service.
2. Moral or "soul" injury describes a veteran's psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual reactions to trauma, especially if they witnessed, participated in, or failed to prevent acts that violated their deeply held moral beliefs.
3. "Veteran Cultural Competency" involves recognition of the nature of a veteran's advanced illness and possible lifetime trauma.
4. Caring professionals can rely on resources and skills to understand what veterans have experienced, prevent reactivation of trauma-related symptoms, help them reconcile their trauma and guilt, and safely pursue closure and forgiveness.
5. Approaches to care can include spiritual growth, social support, pharmacological symptom management, life review, group therapy, mindful meditation, and support for the veteran's family.

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