

# Where Are All The Veterans?

## Increasing Veteran Registration at GP Practices

### Newsletter

October 2020

#### University of Chester

#### Update from Principle Investigator, Professor Alan Finnegan

Welcome to the "Where Are All The Veterans" newsletter. We really enjoyed the initial visit to each of our 12 practice partners and Dr Becky Randles and I thank you for making us so welcome. Also, for ensuring that the initial data searches were completed on time.



We hope that it may be helpful to provide some regular updates regarding the project with its aim of identifying what motivates veterans to notify PHC staff of their armed forces status or register with a GP. We would also like to take this opportunity to share good practice of what each of you have found to be working successfully and learning from effective interventions.

We have distributed a press release explaining that people who have served in the Armed Forces are being urged to inform their local GP practice as part of The University of Chester's Westminster Centre for Veterans' Research initiative to determine the number of military veterans registered at twelve GP medical centre's in Chester, Helsby and Warrington. The news release is one means of conveying the message that a military Veteran is anyone who has served at least one day in our Armed Forces as either a Regular or Reserve. Veterans are estimated as being 5% of the population, and we know that significant numbers still need to be correctly coded within Primary Healthcare. Veterans can have a greater likelihood of some illnesses than their civilian counterparts, such as hearing loss and limb and joint problems. Ex-Forces personnel can also experience specific mental health problems as a result of their military service, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, anxiety and alcohol misuse. In order to provide the correct health resources to meet the needs of these people, it is important to have accurate data on the number of veterans. This importantly includes the more elderly members of our armed forces community who may be socially isolated or living in a care home or assisted living. Many of whom may have completed National Service. There are significant negative implications for veterans, if they are not accessing specific health care provision, due to not being correctly coded and registered within PHC.

The Zap Stands are in position and posters have been up for six weeks. We have additional posters if you need them. I have received feedback from one surgery that the stand is close to where the flu vaccinations have been administered, and many patients have been seen reading or commenting on the content. We are now in the process of completing the second data searches. We will then progress into the next stage of the project that will involve the sending of text message along with disseminating information onto any social media and

websites that you have access to. Dr Becky Randles will be sending a recommended Text, Facebook / Twitter message and the detail is on our webpage at: <https://www1.chester.ac.uk/westminster-centre-research-veterans/research/where-are-all-veterans-finding-forgotten-phase-2>

Covid-19 continues to present challenges, and these do not look like getting any better in the short term. The North West is being particularly hit so fingers crossed that the landscape does not get any worse. Therefore, if you have any ideas, suggestions, recommendations, or information that you would like to share then please let us know. Otherwise, Becky will be in contact regarding a catch-up meeting and I look forward to discussing the project in the coming weeks.

## Sharing Good Practice

Upon receiving feedback from practices, several practices have found success in utilising the Zap Stands in the area where patients will enter the practice, should you have the space to do so. There has also been success in having the Zap Stands in direct eyeline of patients who are receiving a flu vaccination.

Posters have often been used in the windows of the practices, facing outwards, for patients to see who may be queuing or awaiting to enter the practice.

Furthermore, we would also like to share that Culheth Medical Centre in Warrington have included information on Veteran Registration in their September Newsletter, which we would like to encourage other practices to also do, should they have a similar medium.



## Veteran Friendly GP Practice Accreditation

Numerous practices expressed an interest in becoming an accredited Veteran Friendly GP Practice in our initial meetings. We explained that several of the criteria for meeting the accreditation is being met by this project. The accreditation lasts a period of three years. The criteria consist of the following five elements.



1. Ask patients registering with the surgery if they have ever served in the British Armed Forces.
2. Code it on the GP computer system. We recommend that the term 'Military Veteran' is used, you may wish to re-code patients under other terms.
3. Have a clinical lead on veterans in the surgery. This should be a registered health care professional, but could be a nurse or paramedic, not just a GP.
4. This clinical lead is required to undertake dedicated training, attend training events (RCGP or other provider), stay up to date with the latest research and innovations and ensure that the practice is meeting the health commitments of the Armed Forces Covenant. They should also be available to provide advice to colleagues, as well as possibly seeing veterans themselves.
5. Eligible practices should have a CQC 'good' rating or higher.

Applications to become a Veteran Friendly GP Practice are now back open. You can start the process [here](#). If you would like support in completing this process please contact our team ([WCVeterans@chester.ac.uk](mailto:WCVeterans@chester.ac.uk)).

## Events, News & Information

### Armed Forces Community Research International Webinar Series

Every two months, the Centre is holding an Armed Forces Community Research International Webinar Series. These events will be taking place over zoom. Our first webinar took place on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September 2020 with speakers Professor Andy Bacon, the lead for NHS Policy and Strategy for Armed Forces Health and Lieutenant Colonel Debra Ritsperis, the RCN Forum Chair and lead Nurse for Education, Research and Clinical Development at the Army Headquarters. A recording of this session can be viewed [here](#).

We are inviting you to attend our future webinars, with the next one taking place on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 4pm – 5pm. If you are interested in attending or know of any staff who may find this of interest, please register [here](#).

## Research Centre Team

### Staff Members



**Prof Alan Finnegan**

**Professor of Nursing and Military Mental Health, and Director of the Westminster Centre for Research**

Colonel (Ret'd) Alan Finnegan's military career included appointments as Commanding Officer at the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine, MOD Nurse Consultant Advisor in Military Mental Health and Defence Professor of Nursing. His overseas deployments include Iraq, the Balkans, Afghanistan, Africa and four years in Northern Ireland where he was OiC of the Stress and Trauma Clinic within HQNI. On retirement from the Army, he joined the University in 2016.

**Dr Lisa Di Lemma**

**Senior Researcher – Veterans Projects**

Lisa is a psychologist, and her research interests focus on health and cognitive processes, behaviour change and cost-effective interventions. Currently, she is a post-doctoral researcher at the University, the Tackling Serious Stress in Veterans, Carers and Families project is one of her main focuses.



**Dr Becky Randles**

**Researcher – Veterans Projects**

Becky's background lies in Psychology and she has a passion for research which seeks to improve well-being, interventions, and curricula. Currently, she is a post-doctoral researcher at the University, with the Where Are All the Veterans project being one of her main focuses.

**Lauren West**

**Administrative Assistant & PA to Dr Alan Finnegan**

Lauren studied at the University of Chester before gaining employment at the Westminster Centre for Research. She has good links to the military community and assists a number of military forums including being Secretary for the Cheshire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Committee.



**Lottie Ainsworth-Moore**

**Project Administrator – Veterans Projects**

Lottie has a strong background in working with serving personnel, their families and veterans in previous employment with military charities and volunteer work. She is also an Army wife of 10 years.

## Useful Links

[Where are all the Veterans FAQs](#)

[Training developed by Westminster Centre for Veterans Research](#)

[Training developed by the NHS in collaboration with the RCGP](#)

[Veterans Gateway](#)

[Veterans Healthcare Toolkit](#)

[Information on Veteran Friendly GP Practice accreditation](#)

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