The DoD Suicide Event Report (DoDSER)

National Center for Telehealth & Technology (T2)

Defense Centers of Excellence (DCoE) for Psychological Health (PH) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

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Agenda

- Importance of Suicide Surveillance in the Military
- Advances in Standardizing Suicide Surveillance in the DoD
- DoD Suicide Event Report (DoDSER)
  - Development
  - Content and Data Collection
- Future Developments

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Active Duty Military Suicide Rates

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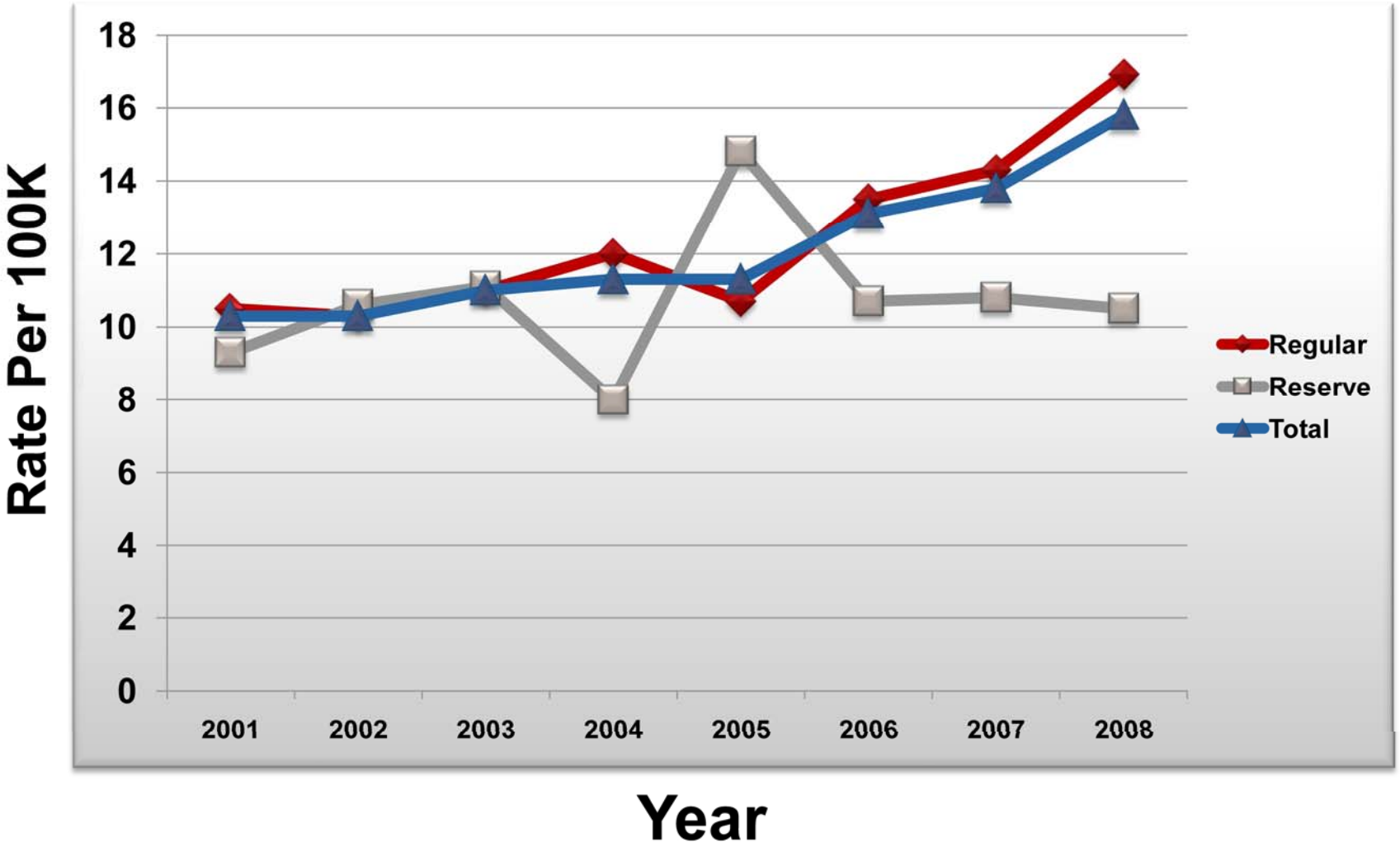

Importance of Suicide Surveillance in the Military

Quality surveillance allows the DoD to:

- Describe the current status
- Track trends and identify patterns
  - Within suicides
  - Between those with suicide behaviors and the population
  - Between the military and civilian cases
- Examine risk factors unique to Warriors
- Identify possible solutions or interventions
- Evaluate the effectiveness of programs & policies
- Provide senior leaders quality data

DoD Suicide Surveillance: Pursuing Standardization

Historically, U.S. Military Services have utilized separate surveillance systems to collect retrospective data about suicide cases:

- Air Force: Suicide Event Surveillance System (SESS)
- Army: Army Suicide Event Report (ASER)
- Navy/Marines: Department of the Navy Suicide Incident Report (DONSIR)

Problem: Combining data for DoD-level analysis was not possible

Development of the DoDSER

- The Services' Suicide Prevention Program Managers meet monthly in the Suicide Prevention and Risk Reduction Committee (SPARRC)
- Successful standardization of suicide rates across Services
- Created interest in standardizing idiosyncratic Service-level surveillance systems
- T2 asked to take the lead in collaboration with the Services to develop the DoDSER

Development of the DoDSER

- Detailed software requirements collaboratively developed with Suicide Prevention Program Managers of all Services (Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines)
- Initial data-collection only website developed and launched 1 January 2008
- Major software revision deployed August, 2009
  - Common Access Card (CAC) Log-In
  - Account Management Features

DoDSER Item Content

- Objective & Subjective, detailed, standardized information:
  - Comprehensive event data (method, location, fatality)
  - Extensive risk factor data
    - dispositional or personal (e.g. demographics)
    - historical or developmental (e.g. military Hx)
    - contextual or situational (e.g. firearm in home)
    - clinical or symptom factors (e.g. diagnoses)

DoDSER Respondents

- Behavioral Health Provider
- Health Care Providers
- Technicians (under supervision)
- Investigative Agents
- Command Representative

DoDSER Data Sources

Suicides	Non-Fatal Suicide Behaviors (Some Services)
Review of medical and BH records	Interview of patient
Personnel and counseling records	Review of medical and BH records
Investigative agency records (e.g. CID)	Interview of co-workers and supervisors as needed
Records related to manner of death (casualty reports, toxicology, autopsy, suicide notes)	
Interview of co-workers/supervisors, responsible investigative agency officer, other involved professionals, or family members when appropriate (some Services)	

The Current DoD Suicide Event Report

- Current DoDSER software includes secure (CAC) login website with:
  - Accounts that differ by role
  - Core set of DoD items and functionality for unique items by Services
  - Coding guidance
  - Item presentation logic, and form field validation
  - Save/Edit functionality
  - Retrieval of historical reports
  - Delete and restore DoDSERs

Future Directions

- Refined DoDSER coding guidance/manual
- Online DoDSER training module
- Pilot project comparing DoDSER data to CDC's National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS)
- Project examining number of non-fatal DoDSER cases that end up in the VA system
- Pilot exploring a system to collect DoDSER control data
- Annual SPARRC Update of Item Content
- Program evaluation of software refinements

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Questions

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