

Giving Back to Veterans by Addressing Their Unique Medical and Mental Health Needs as a VA Nurse

My grandfather was a Korean War veteran who struggled with PTSD and related health declines later in life. As a child, I vividly remember his emotional and physical scars from serving our country.

But he didn't like to discuss his experiences, remaining stoic and private. Later, my uncle, who served in the Gulf War, faced similar hurdles. Their sacrifices inspired me from an early age to care for the diverse needs of our courageous veterans.

I pursued my Bachelor's degree in Nursing, focusing my studies on trauma recovery and mental health. I also interned at a Veterans Affairs (VA) hospital during college. This allowed me to understand veterans' unique experiences better and forge trusting relationships.

After graduation, I proudly accepted a full-time position on the acute psychiatry ward of that same VA hospital. My veteran patients open up to me about their service, trauma, and transition hurdles. I feel privileged to witness their incredible strength and resilience.

Beyond clinical skills, I provide a compassionate listening ear. My goal is to expand the VA's service offerings through nurse education. I plan to pursue my Master's degree and eventually a doctorate in nursing practice.

I hope to teach incoming VA nurses how to sensitively address PTSD, addiction, chronic pain, and other common conditions among veterans. I also aim to facilitate support groups on mental health and healthy coping strategies.

My vision is to integrate holistic well-being approaches into standard VA care. If I can impart just a fraction of the knowledge these courageous men and women have shared with me, I will feel fulfilled in paying it forward.

