

The Download

# **Valuing Veterans – Connecting for Better Health**

May 21, 2025





**Today's Webinar brought to you by**

**Michigan Veteran Service  
Organizations Networking  
Grant (MiVSONG)**

offered by the **Michigan  
Veterans Affairs Agency  
(MVAA)**



# Agenda



## ***Welcome***

Welcome, Overview of Webinar objectives, Introduce our speakers



## ***What Does a Veteran Look Like?***

Understanding how health is impacted from having veteran status and highlighting real-life experiences



## ***Trinity Health's MilVet Program***

A review of the Case Study and it's impact on veteran care



## ***Current Landscape of Veteran Identification***

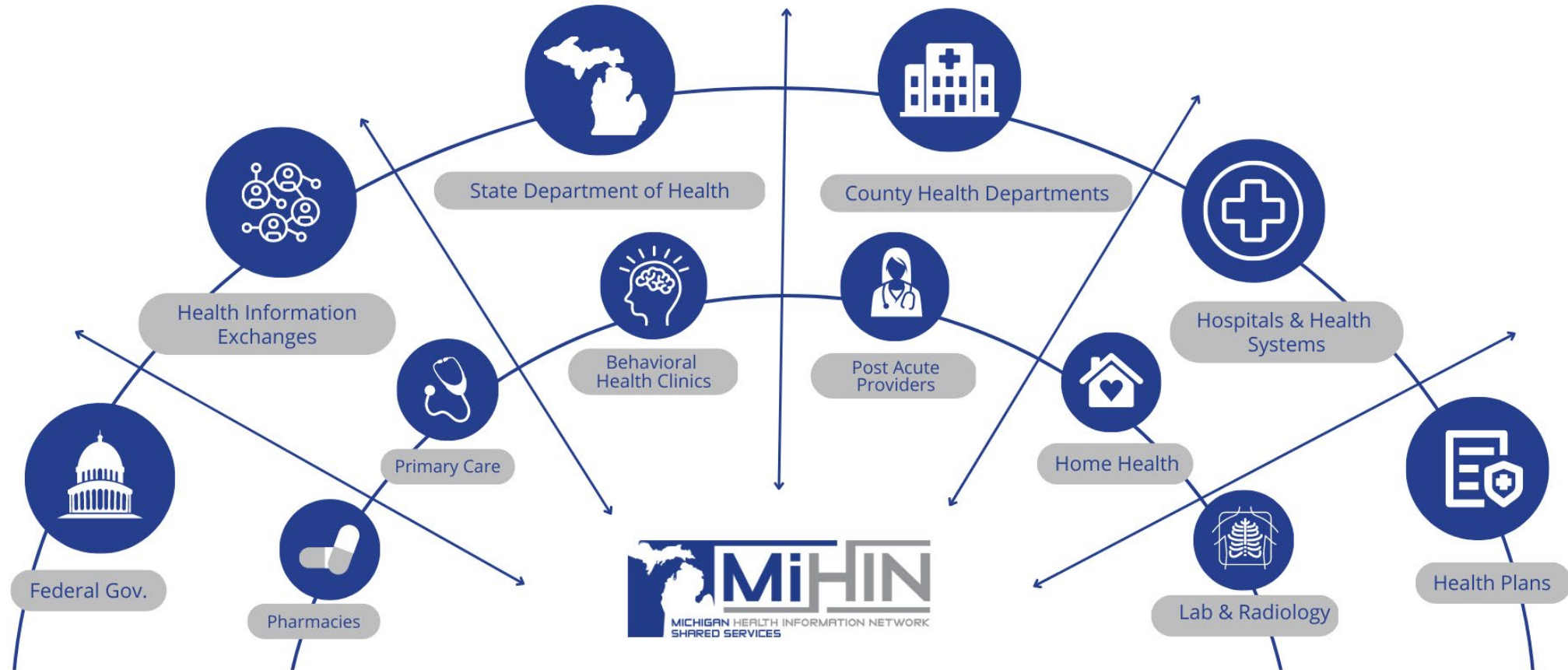
Moderated discussion reviewing all poll responses

# Michigan Health Information Network Shared Services (MiHIN)

MiHIN is Michigan's state-designated entity to continuously improve healthcare quality, efficiency, and patient safety by promoting secure, electronic exchange of health information. MiHIN represents a growing network of public and private organizations working to overcome data sharing barriers, reduce costs, and ultimately advance the health of Michigan's population.



# Network of Networks

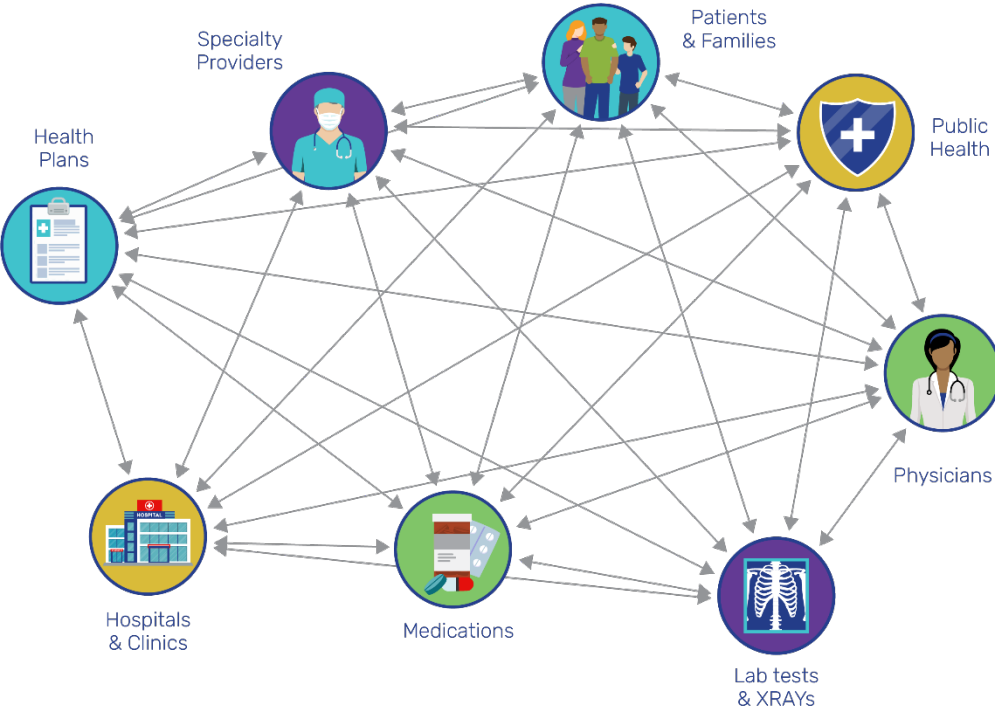


**Making valuable data available at the point of care.**

# Statewide Health Information Exchange Creates Efficiency

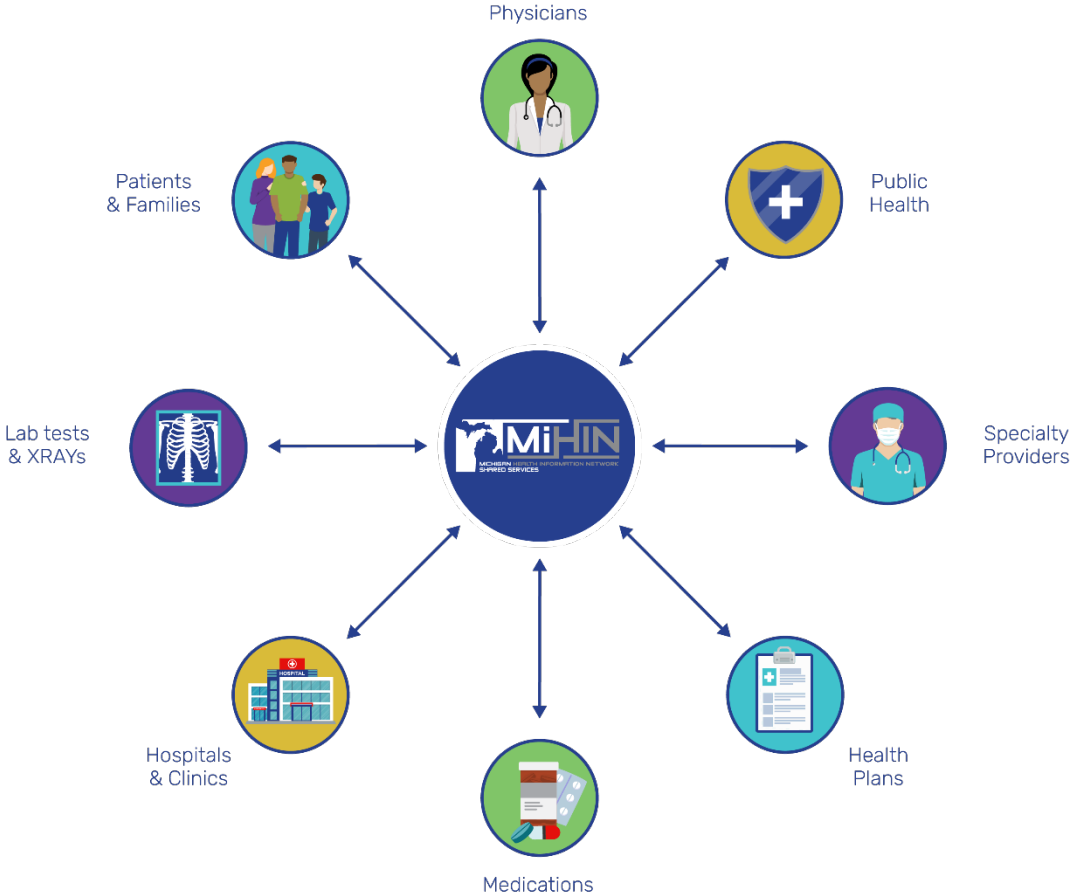
## BEFORE:

Duplication of effort, waste and expense



## NOW:

Connect once to access shared services



# Our Speakers



**Dr. Kevin Bohnsack**

*Executive Medical Director, Population  
Health Management, Trinity Health  
Michigan*



**Andrea Norton, LMSW**

*Women Veteran and Underserved  
Populations Coordinator, Michigan  
Veterans Affairs Agency*



A photograph of a doctor and an elderly patient in a clinical setting. The doctor, a Black woman with a stethoscope, is pointing at a tablet held by the patient, an elderly woman with short grey hair. They are both smiling. The background shows a clinic with a 'SHOTS' poster and a human anatomy diagram. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

# **What Does a Veteran Look Like?**

Andrea Norton



# Is Veteran a Title or Identity?

## What Does a Veteran Look Like?



**Michigan Veterans  
Affairs Agency**

# Unique Health Care Concerns of Veterans

Data from the US Department of Veterans Affairs Post Deployment Integrative Care Initiative indicate 7 health conditions that confront Veterans:

- Musculoskeletal injuries
- Chronic Pain
- Mental Illness
- PTSD
- TBI
- Environmental/Toxic Exposures
- Military Sexual Trauma

Do not forget that “Veterans” are a diverse population!





Andrea M. Norton,  
LMSW



USAF Veteran  
(1998-2007)

## Women Veterans & Underserved Populations Coordinator

- Developing and administering outreach programs with a focus on underserved veterans
- Performing inter-agency, public, and federal VA advocacy efforts
- Serves as a conduit between veterans, community partners, and MVAA



Michigan Veterans  
Affairs Agency



# Social Determinants of Health



- Joined military in 1998, one month after high school graduation
- Served 8 years under “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy as bisexual woman
- Separated from military in 2007 and moved from San Diego back to Michigan
- Enrolled at MSU and was 1 of 3 non-traditional students in my undergrad program
- Isolated in apartment off campus; some interaction with LGBTQ community; no connection to veterans –didn’t identify as a veteran and no veteran resource office
- Family approximately 100 miles away; difficulty making friends and relating to civilians
- Minimal university healthcare access initially; wasn’t asked about military history and didn’t disclose veteran status
- Used Post 9/11 GI Bill for tuition and lived off of student loans
- Finally enrolled in VA in 2009; no designated women’s health providers at clinic; women’s health provider had to travel from Battle Creek to Lansing once a month for basic women’s wellness exams



# Mission & Vision

- **Mission**

MVAA is the central coordinating agency for the state, providing support, care, advocacy and service to veterans and their families

- **Vision**

Making Michigan a destination that veterans and their families choose to live, raise a family, work, retire and play



Michigan Veterans  
Affairs Agency

# Structure

## Michigan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

- Michigan National Guard (Air and Army - MING)
- **Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA)**
- Michigan Veteran Homes (MVH)
- Michigan Youth Challenge Academy (MYCA)

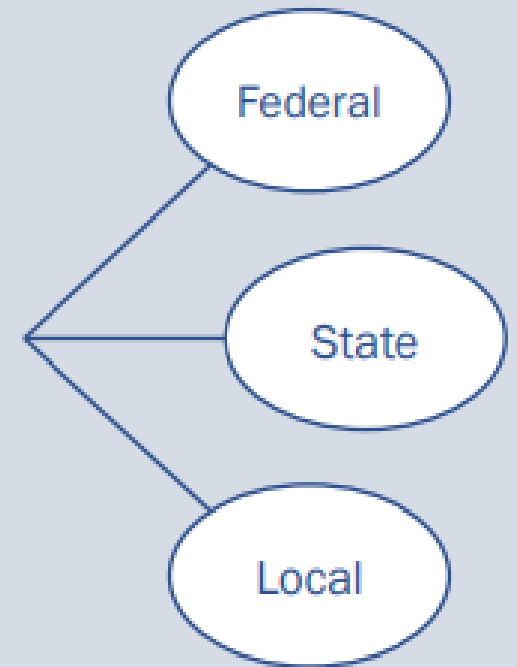


Michigan Veterans  
Affairs Agency



# Central Coordinating Agency for Veterans

- MVAA helps connect veterans and their families to local, state and federal resources and services
- We are dedicated to serving all veterans, including those who have been traditionally underserved or underrepresented
- The **Michigan Veteran Resource Service Center** serves as the nerve center of MVAA

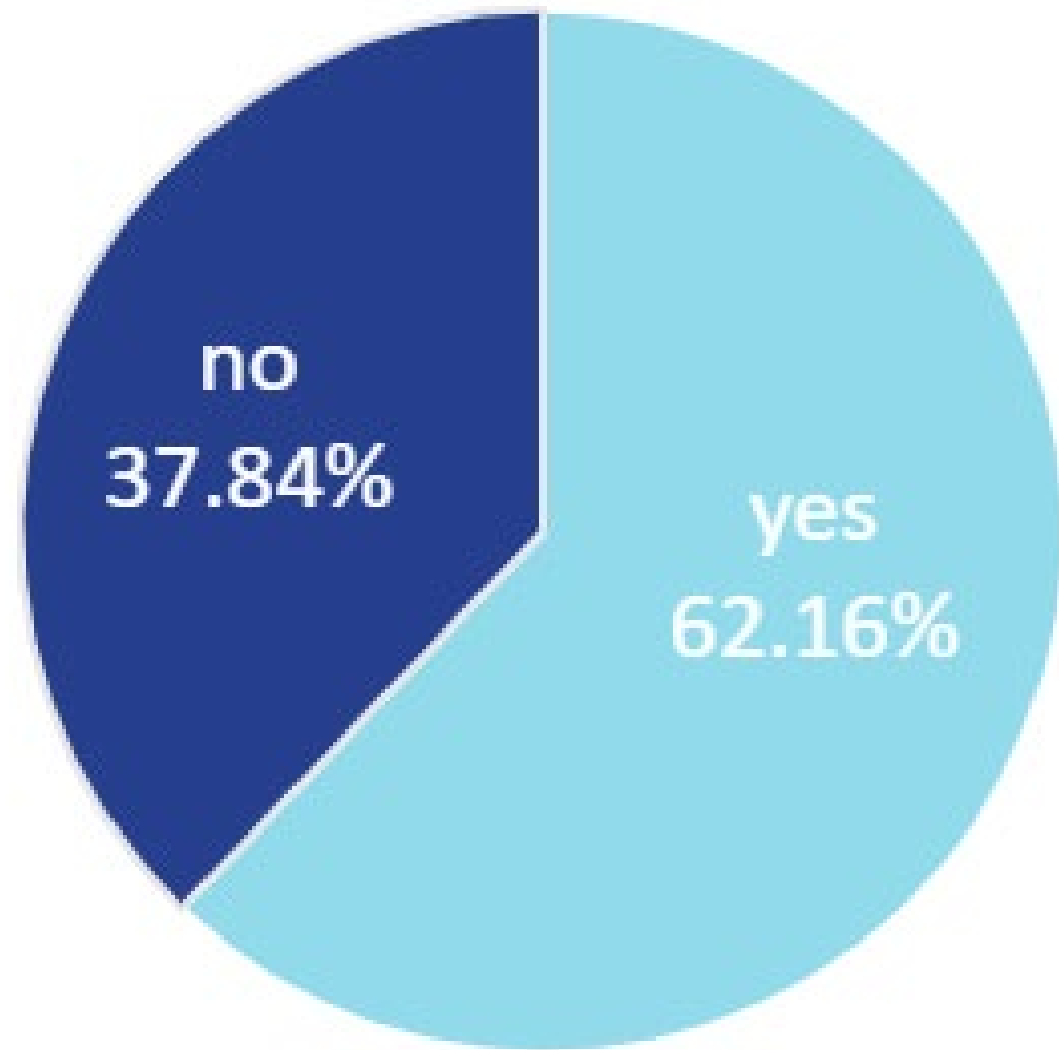


The background is a solid blue color with a faint, semi-transparent image of a stethoscope. Overlaid on this are several hexagonal icons: a large white plus sign in a circle on the left, a brain, a person in a wheelchair, a heart with a pulse line, a camera, a clipboard, a DNA helix, and another plus sign. The text is centered in a large, bold, white font.

# **Current Landscape of Veteran Identification and Support in Michigan**

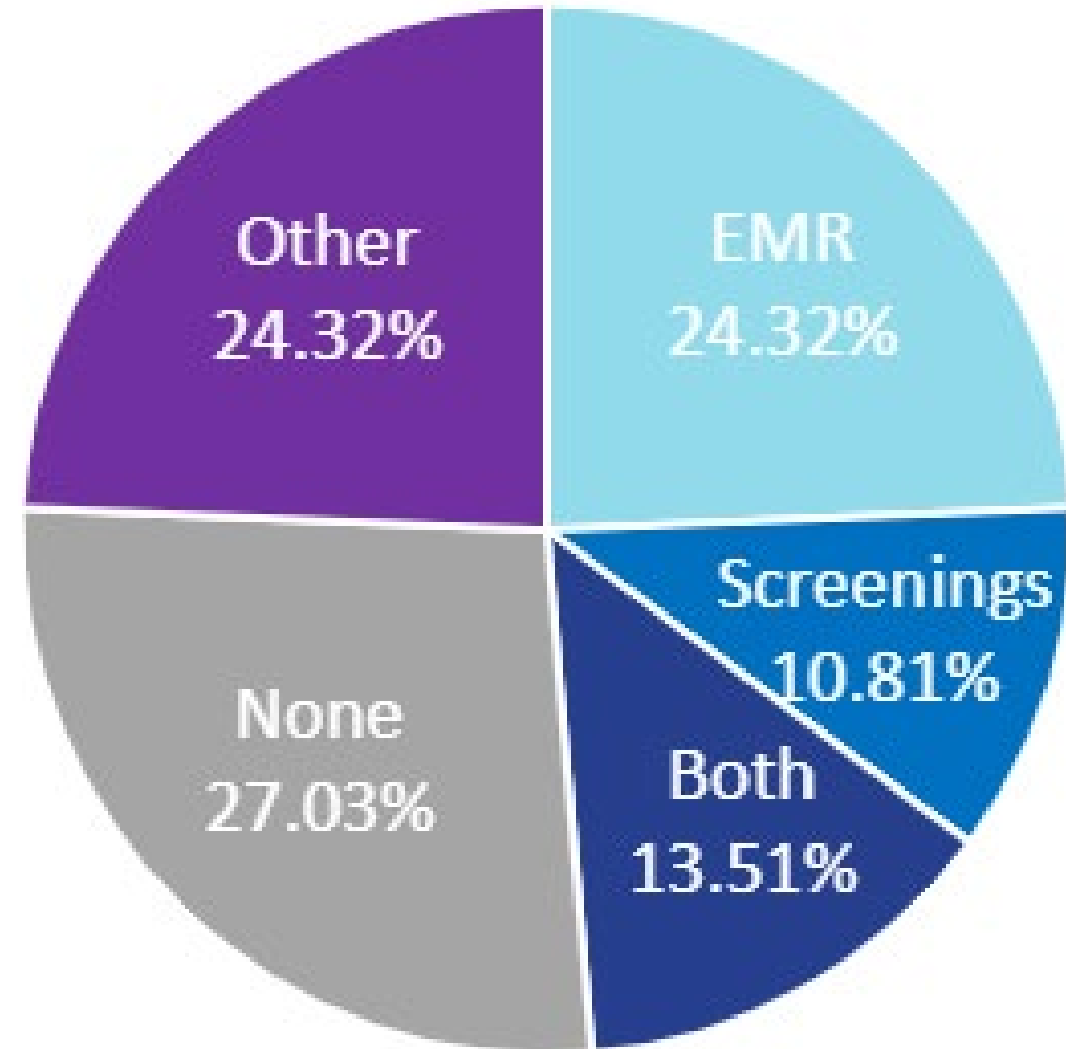
Kayla Traxel

**Is it currently an organizational focus to identify a veteran and get them to a veteran specific resource that can help them?**

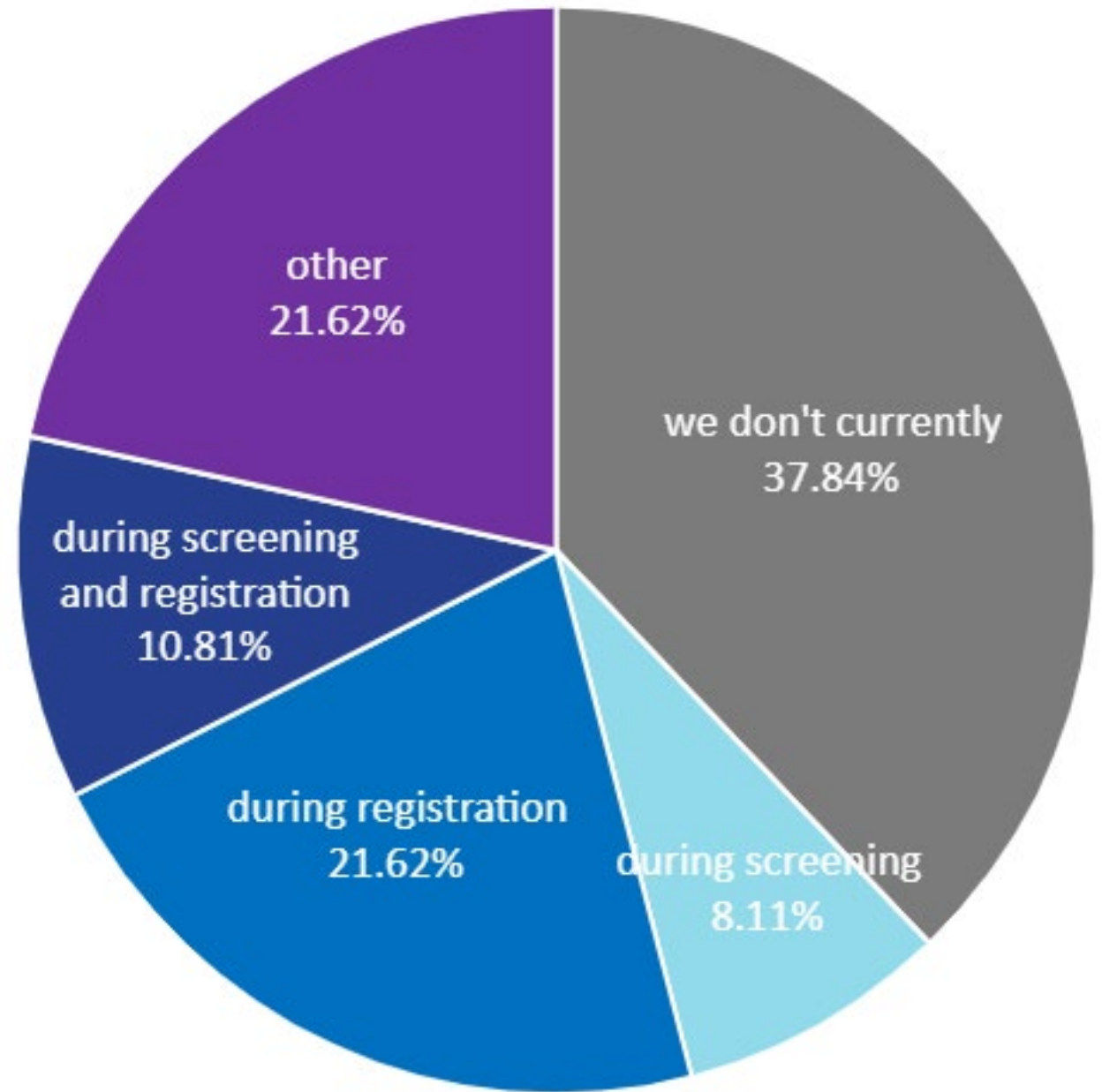




**What tool does your organization have to capture veteran or dependent status?**



## When do you ask a person for their veteran status?



# Current practices for identifying veteran status during patient intake and registration

- Please complete the poll in your pop-up window





A map of the Great Lakes region, showing Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, Lake Huron, Lake Erie, and Lake Ontario. The map includes various cities and towns, as well as state and provincial boundaries. The text is overlaid on the map, centered over Lake Michigan.

# Trinity Health's MilVet Program: A Case Study

Dr. Kevin Bohnsack

# Colonel (ret.) (Dr.) Kevin Bohnsack



- Executive Medical Director, Population Health Management, Trinity Health Michigan
- Member, Veteran Health and Wellness Collaborative
- Family Physician, TH IHA Medical Group
- Retired State Air Surgeon at Michigan Air National Guard



*\*The views expressed are those of the speaker and do not reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, US Air Force, State of Michigan, Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, Michigan National Guard, or the Michigan Air National Guard.*



# Unique Exposures in the Training and Operational Environments






# Who are MilVet Patients?

MilVet patients represent a poorly understood sub-population

- Requires community health care providers to understand the medical and mental impacts of military service.
- Have been exposed to a very different social culture, behave differently from their military experiences, and frequently have different health care expectations



***Military culture extends into service members' off duty lives, affecting everyday lifestyle of them and their family***

# ***Unit Cohesion***

**For Improved  
Provider/Patient  
Communications**



## **Group Pride, Collective Identity**

Pride with identifying with their group as an entity



## **Social Cohesion**

Group members feel emotionally close



## **Task Cohesion**

Shared commitment to a common goal from a collective effort



## **Morale and Esprit de Corps**

Enthusiasm and persistence when engaging in prescribed activities of the group



## **Efficacy or Group Potency**

Shared beliefs in collective power to produce desired results



# Rate of Select Poor Health Outcomes Between Those Served and Not Served

## Result: Poor Health Outcomes

Disease	Not Served	Served	Difference
Cancer	9.8%	11.1%	11.7%
Coronary Heart Disease	3.4%	5.5%	38.2%
Heart Attack	3.6%	6%	40%
Stroke	2.7%	3.2%	15.6%
Diabetes	9.2%	9.9%	7.1%
COPD	6.0%	6.5%	7.7%

United Health Foundation. (2024). *America's Health Rankings Health of Those Who Have Served Report*.  
[https://assets.americashealthrankings.org/app/uploads/htwhs\\_report\\_r3.pdf](https://assets.americashealthrankings.org/app/uploads/htwhs_report_r3.pdf)

# Healthcare Professional's Knowledge Gap

## A Barrier to Culturally Competent Care in Communities

- Few medical, nursing, pharmacy, or therapy schools teach military service associated injuries, illnesses, and occupational exposures
- The Lack of relevant knowledge hinders ability for community and health care providers to connect, communicate, and provide patient-centered care for this sub-population

***Becoming culturally competent helps us connect, communicate, and provide care and services to vulnerable MilVet patients.***

# MilVet Training Program

- Foundations Course



***// A successful team beats with one heart.***

At the heart of military culture are the TAUGHT and EXPECTED values of loyalty, duty, honor, integrity, courage, and respect.

# Additional Cultural Competencies for MilVets

## For Improved Patient/Provider Communications

- Branch(es) of Service Served
- Active, Reserve, National Guard, Retired
- Special Operations
- Occupation Specialty
- Office v. Enlisted v. Family member
- Character of Military Discharge





# Importance of Cross-Cultural Communication with the MilVet Community

## MilVet patients are more comfortable when receiving treatment from:

- Professionals of same/similar backgrounds
- Providers with military affiliation
- Colleagues who attempt to understand and communicate

## Combat Veterans heal faster when they:

- Are in a trusted place
- Feel comfortable and supported by their health care community
- Can develop a strong provider connection

## Factors when communication is not culturally sensitive:

- Less satisfaction with their experience of care
- Increased risk for miscommunication
- Patients may not be fully communicative or cooperative with their care plan

An aerial photograph of a large suspension bridge, likely the Mackinac Island Bridge, spanning a wide body of water. The bridge features two tall, white, A-frame towers with intricate lattice work. Numerous suspension cables fan out from the towers to support the bridge deck. The water is a deep blue, and the sky is a lighter blue with some distant clouds. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent blue overlay. The title text is centered over the middle of the bridge.

# **Collaborative Linkages for Older Adult Veterans**

Andrea Norton



# **Q&A: Building Consensus and Next Steps**



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# THANK YOU

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## LET'S CONNECT



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