Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Obesity, and Marijuana Use in Marine Corps Veterans

Andrew S. Vetter, Cole Williamson, Josh Zaback, Emily J. Sauers. East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania, East Stroudsburg, PA

Higher rates of obesity are seen in people diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Those with PTSD often turn to substance use/abuse. There is a lack of information on the relationship between marijuana use, PTSD, and obesity in military veterans. PURPOSE: This study examined the association between marijuana use, PTSD, and obesity in Marine Corps veterans. METHODS: A survey assessing Marine Corps veteran demographic information (height, weight), service history (years of service, number of deployments), and health habits (exercise, substance use, and PTSD history) was administered via a Facebook group of Marine Corps veterans. One hundred (70 male, 30 female) subjects completed the survey. Paired sample t-tests were used to compare dependent variables between PTSD and non-PTSD subjects. RESULTS: Subjects with PTSD had been deployed more times (1.90±1.73 times) vs subjects without PTSD (0.94±1.12; p=0.02). Subjects with PTSD had a higher body mass index (BMI) (34.15±8.23 kg/m²) vs subjects without PTSD (28.14±4.71 kg/m²; p=0.004). Subjects with PTSD did not consume alcohol (AL; 2.76±1.2), tobacco (TO; 1.48±1.87), or marijuana (MJ; 0.90±1.67) to a greater extent vs. subjects without PTSD (AL: 3.08±0.96; p=0.27; TO: 1.30±1.68; p=0.27; MJ: 0.68±1.2; p=0.58). Subjects with PTSD did not exercise more frequently (2.23±1.91) vs subjects without PTSD (2.05±2.16; p=0.65). CONCLUSION: BMI is significantly higher in Marine Corp veterans diagnosed with PTSD compared to veterans without PTSD while substance use and exercise was not different between groups.