

Pilot Project: The Impact of Military Service on Racial Disparities in Cognitive Function

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Abstract

Alzheimer's Disease and related dementias (ADRD) affect a substantial amount of the older United States population and disproportionately affects Black older adults. A promising avenue of exploration for this detrimental racial health disparity are early-life experiences with military service. Military service is an important variable in the context of ADRD and racial health disparities because (a) it was pervasive within the 20th century and helped shape the lives of today's older population, (b) it has the ability to shape well-being over long periods of time and in multiple domains of life, and (c) it exposes individuals to risks *and* resources. The objective of this analysis is to examine whether early-life military service helps explain Black-White disparities in self-reported cognitive function and doctor diagnosed ADRD at older ages. The proposed project will use nationally representative, longitudinal data from the Health and Retirement Study (HRS) along with restricted VA medical records linked to the HRS.