

An Aviator Centered Approach to Mental Health: A Preliminary Look at Stressors, Barriers to Care, and Untreated Aviator Mental Health

Aric J. Raus
Army University, aricraus@raus-ocasio.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ntas>



Part of the [Human Factors Psychology Commons](#), and the [Industrial and Organizational Psychology Commons](#)

Raus, Aric J., "An Aviator Centered Approach to Mental Health: A Preliminary Look at Stressors, Barriers to Care, and Untreated Aviator Mental Health" (2023). *National Training Aircraft Symposium (NTAS)*. 25.
<https://commons.erau.edu/ntas/2022/presentation/25>

This Abstract - Paper/Presentation Only is brought to you for free and open access by the Conferences at Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in National Training Aircraft Symposium (NTAS) by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact commons@erau.edu.

An Aviator Centered Approach to Mental Health: A Preliminary Look at Stressors, Barriers to Care, and Untreated Aviator Mental Health

Lieutenant Colonel Aric J. Raus
Assistant Professor,
U.S. Army Command and General Staff College
Army University
October 25, 2022

The views expressed in this presentation and on the following slides are solely those of the presenter and not necessarily those of the U.S. Department of Defense, the United States Army, or Army University.

Moving Towards an Aviator Centered Approach to Mental Health

2015 - Germanwings Flight 9525

2019 – 60% Delayed or Avoided Medical Care

2021 – 56% Sought Unauthorized Care

Hypothesis: Pilots Want Care, But on Their Terms

Mental Health Stressors

Training – Mental Fatigue and Financial



Commercial – Social and Medical



Military – Isolation and Powerlessness



Acharya et al., 2018; Bor & Hubbard 2006; Britt et al., 2016, 2018; Cullen et al., 2021; Jacobs et al, 2020; Mendonca et al., 2019, 2021

Mental Health Stressor Commonalities

Worry and Fear

Social Isolation

Fatigue

Acharya et al., 2018; Britt et al., 2016, 2018; Bor & Hubbard 2006;
Cullen et al., 2021; Jacobs et al, 2020; Mendonca et al., 2019, 2021

Assessed (& Assumed) Barriers to Care

Stigma

Mistrust

Loss of Career / Livelihood

Expense

Pilot Personality

Safety Implications from Untreated Aviators

Presenteeism

Fatigue

Poor Mental Health

Safety Implications from Untreated Aviators

Presenteeism

63% Reporting to Work When Unfit

69% Report Making Five or More In Flight Errors When Unfit

Only 25% Called In Sick for Unfit Conditions



Safety Implications from Untreated Aviators

Fatigue

89% of Commercial Pilots Report Fatigue in Cockpit

50% Stating Fatigue Impaired Flight Operations

51% of Collegiate Flight Flew When Extremely Fatigued

78% of Which Overlooked Mistakes Due to Fatigue

Safety Implications from Untreated Aviators

Poor Mental Health

36% Report up to 7 Poor Mental Health Days per Month

44.5% for 41 - 50-year-olds

13.6% of Clinical Depression Among ATPs

4.1% Reported Suicidal Thoughts

What is an Aviator Centered Approach?

Provides Care Focused on Individual Needs:

Knowledge Needed for Pilot Self-Evaluation

Treatments that are Proven, Trusted, and Desired

Delivered Via Method They Want

Building Trust and Faith with Regulators and AME/HIMS

Why an Aviator Centered Treatment?

Current System Is Missing Pilots' Needs

56% of Pilots Report Unauthorized Aeromedical Behavior

45.7% Sought Informal Advice

26.8% Misrepresented Conditions

Why an Aviator Centered Treatment?

Pilots Want to Seek Help

74.8% Willing to Use Alternative Sanctioned Intervention

68-69% Willing to Use Anonymous Hotline

43-48% Pseudo-Anonymous Hotline

Research Needed

Investigates Benefits of:

Self-Help and Self-Evaluation Training

Mindfulness Training and Counseling

Mental Health Wellness Counseling and Support

Virtual and Online CBT

Psychiatric Counseling Definition

Air Line Pilots Association, 2022; Possemato et al., 2018; Rice et al., 2018; Strid et al. 2016; Sung et al., 2019; U.S. Dept of Defense, 2022; U.S. Dept of Veterans Affairs, 2022

References

- Acharya, L., Jin, L., & Collins, W. (2018).) College life is stressful today – Emerging stressors and depressive symptoms in college students. *Journal of American College Health, 66*(7), 655-664. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2018.1451869>.
- Aikins, D. E., Pietrzak, R. H., Geraci, J. C., Benham, T., Morrissey, P., & Southwick, S. M. (2020). Beyond stigma: Understanding the “inclined abstainers” in military behavioral health-care utilization. *Military Psychology, 419-427*.
- Air Line Pilots Association. (2022, October 15). *Pilot Peer Support*. Retrieved from Air Line Pilots Association: <https://www.alpa.org/resources/pilot-peer-support>
- Bor, R., & Hubbard, T. (2006). *Aviation mental health psychological implications for air transportation*. Ashgate.
- Britt, T. W., Jennings, K. S., Cheung, J. H., Pury, C. S., Zinzow, H. M., Raymond, M. A., & McFadden, A. C. (2016). Determinants of mental health treatment seeking among soldiers who recognize their problem: Implications for high-risk occupations. *Work & Stress, 30*(4), 318–336. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02678373.2016.1246490>.
- Britt, T. W., McGhee, J. S., & Quattlebaum, M. D. (2018). Common mental disorders among US army aviation personnel: Prevalence and return to duty. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 1-14*.
- Cullen, P., Cahill, J., & Gaynor, K. (2021). A qualitative study exploring well-being and the potential impact of work-related stress among commercial airline pilots. *Aviation Psychology and Applied Human Factors, 11*(1), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1027/2192-0923/a000199>.
- Daku, S. (2021). Mental Health Survey of UND Students. *UND Aviation Mental Health Summit*. Chicago: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNUA7dL_mgo&list=PLwxMPKSgEvgzXjHmB85x86Ts_IICdbhVK&index=4
- European Union Aviation Safety Agency. (2022, October 10). *EASA’s response to the Germanwings Flight 9525 accident*. Retrieved from European Union Aviation Safety Agency: <https://www.easa.europa.eu/en/domains/aircrew-and-medical/follow-up-germanwings-flight-9525-accident#0>
- Frantell, K. (2021). Mental Health Help-Seeking. *UND Aviation Mental Health Summit*. Chicago: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNUA7dL_mgo&list=PLwxMPKSgEvgzXjHmB85x86Ts_IICdbhVK&index=4.
- Hoffman, W. (2021). Hiding in plain sight: US aviation healthcare anxiety, aversion and delay. *UND Mental Health Summit*. Chicago: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNUA7dL_mgo&list=PLwxMPKSgEvgzXjHmB85x86Ts_IICdbhVK&index=4.
- Hoffman, W., Chervu, N., Geng, X., & Üren, A. (2019). Pilots’ healthcare seeking anxiety when experiencing chest pain. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, 61*(9), e401–e405. <https://doi.org/10.1097/JOM.0000000000001662>.
- Jacobs, D., Niemczyk, M., Nullmeyer, R., Cooke, N., & Cline, P. (2020). Depression, Anxiety, and Stress in Collegiate Aviators. *Collegiate Aviation Review International, 38*(1), 46-68. Retrieved from <http://ojs.library.okstate.edu/osu/index.php/CARI/articl>.
- Johansson, F., & Melin, M. (2018). Fit for flight? Inappropriate presenteeism among Swedish commercial airline pilots and its threats to flight safety. *The International Journal of Aerospace Psychology, 84-97*.

References

- Mead, K. H., Wang, Y., Cleary, S., Arem, H., & Pratt-Chapman, M. L. (2021). Defining a patient-centered approach to cancer survivorship care: Development of the patient centered survivorship care index. *BMC Health Services Research*, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-021-07356-6>.
- Mendonca, F. A., Keller, J., Levin, E., & Teo, A. (2021). Understanding Fatigue within a Collegiate Aviation Program. *The International Journal of Aerospace Psychology*, *31*(3), 181-197. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24721840.2020.1865819>.
- Mendonca, F., Keller, J., & Chientsung, L. (2019). Fatigue identification and management in flight training: An investigation of collegiate aviation pilots. *International Journal of Aviation, Aeronautics, and Aerospace*, *6*(5), <https://doi.org/10.15394/ijaaa.2019.1365>.
- Possemato, K., Wray, L. O., Johnson, E., Webster, B., & Beehler, G. P. (2018). Facilitators and barriers to seeking mental health care among primary care veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 742-752.
- Rice, V. J., Liu, B., & Schroeder, P. J. (2018). Impact of in-person and virtual world mindfulness training on symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and attention deficit disorder and hyperactivity disorder. *Military Medicine*, *183*, 413-420.
- Snyder, Q. (2021). Aviation Mental Health Summit Overview. *UND Aviation Mental Health Summit*. Chicago: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NK0Onz22XGk&list=PLwxMPKSGEvgzXjHmB85x86Ts_IICdbhVK&index=3.
- Spatz, E. S., & Spertus, J. A. (2012). Shared Decision Making: A path toward improved patient-centered outcomes. *Circulation: Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes*, *5*(6), e75-e77. <https://doi.org/10.1161/CIRCOUTCOMES.112.969717>.
- Strid, C., Andersson, C., Forsell, Y., Ojehagen, A., & Lundh, L.-G. (2016). Internet-based cognitive behaviour therapy and physical exercise – Effects studied by automated telephone assessment in mental ill-health patients; a randomized controlled trial. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, *55*, 414-428.
- Sung, E., Chang, J. H., Lee, S., & Park, S. H. (2019). The moderating effect of cognitive flexibility in relationships between work stress and psychological symptoms in Korean Air Force pilots. *Military Psychology*, 100-106. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08995605.2018.1556083>.
- Turpyn, C. C., Chaplin, T. M., Cook, E. C., & Martelli, A. A. (2015). A person-centered approach to adolescent emotion regulation: Associations with psychopathology and parenting. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2015.02.009>.
- U.S. Department of Defense. (2022, October 19). *Specialty Consultations*. Retrieved from Military One Source: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/confidential-help/specialty-consultations/>
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2022, October 19). *Military Crisis Line*. Retrieved from Veterans Crisis Line: <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help-now/military-crisis-line/>
- U.S. Federal Aviation Administration. (2015). *Pilot Fitness Aviation Rulemaking Committee Report*. U.S. Federal Aviation Administration.
- Wu, A. C., Donnelly-McLay, D., Weisskopf, M. G., McNeely, E., & Betancourt, T. S. (2016). Airplane pilot mental health and suicidal. *Environmental Health*, *15*(121), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12940-016-0200-6>.