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### **In Soldiers, Risk for Suicide Attempt is Highest 30 Days After Suicidal Thoughts**

**Bethesda, Md.** – The risk of suicide attempt for Soldiers with suicide ideation is highest within the first 30 days after they have suicidal thoughts, according to a study published Sept. 1 in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* by researchers at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU). The study also found that Soldiers with a prior anxiety disorder diagnosis, women, and combat medics, are at greater risk for suicide attempt.

The study, “Predictors of Suicide Attempt Within 30 Days After First Medically Documented Suicidal Ideation in U.S. Army Soldiers,” examined risk factors for suicide attempt within the first month after a diagnosis of suicidal ideation (or thoughts), to better understand suicide risk factors among Soldiers. They used data from the Army Study to Assess Risk and Resilience in Servicemembers – also known as Army STARRS – to look at health care records of more than 11,000 active duty enlisted Soldiers, who had their first documented suicidal ideation, and no prior documented suicide attempts. Of all the Soldiers, about seven percent went on to attempt suicide, and nearly half of those attempted suicide within 30 days after the diagnosis of suicidal ideation. The risk decreased over time – ultimately suggesting that this 30-day window is a very high risk time, explained Dr. Robert Ursano, the study’s senior author, and director of USU’s Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress.

The study also found those diagnosed with a sleep disorder on the same day as the suicidal ideation, were most likely to attempt suicide within 30 days. Interestingly, a diagnosis of anxiety disorder on the same day as ideation (often considered a risk factor) was associated with a lower suicide attempt risk. A diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder was not associated with an increased risk of suicide attempt within 30 days in these soldiers.

Also, the researchers found about half (52.7 percent) of these Soldiers who had documented suicidal thoughts were in their first two years of service, and almost 58 percent of those had never deployed. Since the greatest number of suicide attempts appears to occur in the early years of service, focusing on Soldiers early in their service could potentially offer the greatest impact, Ursano said.

“Identifying suicide risk is challenging and raises many questions, but these findings are critically important to answering some of our most challenging questions,” he said. “Knowing the who, the when, and the where of suicide risk is one of the best ways we can target interventions.”

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university and the academic heart of the Military Health System. USU students are primarily active duty uniformed officers in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Public Health Service who receive specialized education in tropical and infectious diseases, TBI and PTSD, disaster response and humanitarian assistance, global health, and acute trauma care. USU also has graduate programs in oral biology, biomedical sciences and public health committed to excellence in research. The University's research program covers a wide range of areas important to both the military and public health. For more information about USU and its programs, visit [www.usuhs.edu](http://www.usuhs.edu).