



CASE STUDY



OnPage Supports Veterans In PTSD Study

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Sarah Carter is a 5th year PhD in the clinical psychology program at George Mason. Her focus of study is on PTSD, stress, suicide, military couples and social support.

Situation

Sarah's goal was to better understand suicidality in soldiers by asking them to fill out a short Qualtrics survey. If the responses on the survey correlate with a high propensity to suicidality, then Sarah or one of the three members of her team needed to be immediately paged.

However, Sarah was unable to find an affordable solution that enabled immediate paging as well as escalation to one of her colleagues for instances when she was not available.

Solution

Given the importance of Sarah's subject matter and the critical need for better mental health services in the Army, OnPage gave her and her colleagues pro bono licenses to the OnPage application.

Product

OnPage Critical Alert Management System. Messages sent with OnPage arrive five times faster than with traditional pagers.

Benefits

- Zero missed alerts
- Escalation
- Ease of use
- Content of page is easy to view
- Budget friendly
- HIPAA compliance

About Sarah Carter

Sarah is a 5th year PhD in the clinical psychology program at George Mason. Her focus of study is on PTSD, stress, suicide, military couples and social support.

In September 2015, Sarah received an NIMH (National Institute of Mental Health) funded grant to study suicidality in Army service members.

Impediment

Sarah's goal was to better understand suicidality in soldiers by asking them to fill out a short Qualtrics survey on their computer every night for 2 weeks. If the responses on the survey correlate with a high propensity to suicidality, then Sarah or one of the three members of her team needed to be immediately paged.

However, Sarah was unable to find an affordable solution that enabled immediate paging as well as escalation to one of her colleagues for instances when she was not available.

Solution

Given the importance of Sarah's subject matter and the critical need for better mental health services in the Army, OnPage gave her and her colleagues *pro bono* licenses to the OnPage application.

Purpose, Goals and Methods of NIMH Study

Military service members and veterans are at high risk for suicide. Romantic relationships can be a protective factors against suicidality or a trigger for suicidality. However little is known about which interactions between partners can help or hurt suicidal service members. Relationship and divorce are key factors in suicide across both the civilian and military populations. However, service members are unique because they have both a higher rate of marriage as well as stress within the marriage. Soldiers face less risk of suicide if they are married. However, distress in relationships and divorce are among the largest causes of suicidality.

Soldiers face more risk if they have recently ended a relationship or previously tried to commit suicide.

Military families move around a lot. As a result, many lack deep social networks in their immediate communities. Additionally, deployments and trainings lead to the separation of family units. While these are interesting data points, they are static points that cannot be changed.

Sarah's study looks to enroll both active duty service members and veterans to participate in a two week study that investigates their thoughts on a daily basis, particularly as they relate to suicide. Every night that the soldier is enrolled in the study, he or she will answer questions about their interactions with their romantic partner and mood. Given the short amount of time Sarah feels she can expect soldiers to focus on the survey, she concentrates her questions on the details of romantic relationship interactions and suicide ideation and risk factors. Sarah wants to know how interactions with romantic partners impact a soldier's suicidality. The survey will ask questions that cover topics such as:

- ***Did you and your partner have any conflict?***
- ***Did your partner give you support?***
- ***Did you give your partner support?***
- ***Is your mood positive or are you depressed?***
- ***Do you currently have the urge or intent to kill yourself?***

Currently, the field has broad information around the causes of suicidation. But Sarah want to get to understand what is happening right before the moment of suicide. If something happened and later that night they are having thoughts of suicide, what was the trigger? If their suicidal thoughts are reduced, what happened differently that day? That's where mental health professionals need to be intervening. According to Sarah:

We need to look at process and mechanisms behind suicide ideation and behaviors. We need to have more specifics than just that there was an argument in a relationship. We need to know what behaviors are helpful to target.

The importance of OnPage

During the course of the two weeks they are enrolled in the study, servicemen and women need to answer questions in a Qualtrics survey every night about their emotional health. After answering the survey, Qualtrics will send an email to Sarah. Sarah needed to make sure that the emails are forwarded to her and can escalate if she is unable to respond.

Problem with pagers

Sarah found that 90's era pagers were expensive and had a significant downside. If Sarah used a pager and had one of her colleagues as backup, she would have had to physically pass the pager to that individual.

Otherwise she would have continually needed to be on-call. Given the importance of what she is doing, Sarah couldn't be unavailable for even a few hours. According to Sarah:

With a typical pager, only I get the page and I am responsible 24/7.

Sarah needed to know that if she was treating another patient or unavailable for consult for whatever reason, one of her colleagues would be able to receive the alert. Sarah wanted to be able to focus on the patient in front of her and allow pages to escalate.

OnPage Escalation

OnPage's integration with email enables messages sent by Qualtrics to be forwarded to Sarah's OnPage account. Previous OnPage studies have shown that emails are forwarded to OnPage in under 20 seconds* (see OnPage blog from 10.6.16, *OnPage integration with Microsoft Outlook Email*).

Yet Sarah looked to Onpage for more than just an ability to transform emails into immediate alerts on her smartphone. What Sarah needed was a tool that could also escalate alerts to her team.

I did a lot of research and OnPage was the only one like it I found



Escalate alerts if the initial individual alerted is not available. Multiple redundancies and failover options available

OnPage's escalation feature makes sure that if an incident is not acknowledged or resolved within a pre-determined amount of time, it will be escalated to the correct user.

Escalation allows Sarah to customize who will receive the alert, the amount of time to wait before escalating to the next user in her group and which user the alert should be escalated to.

These capabilities were exactly what Sarah needed as traditional pagers options were expensive and didn't offer these abilities.

Impact on patients

Once Sarah or one of her colleagues receives the information suggesting that a service member might be considering suicide, they contact the service member immediately. Sarah is also working with the Veterans Crisis line which specializes in helping service members. Sarah wants to make sure that her team is taking care of soldiers in her study. As a PI, Sarah want to make sure that when soldiers indicate feelings of suicidality, Sarah can respond.

OnPage is great. I am NEVER in a situation when a soldier indicates signs of suicidality and me or my team don't respond.

Conclusion

Sarah and her team are looking forward to better understanding the causes of suicidality in service members. They hope that by focusing on the impacts of relationships on mental health, they can provide better intervention to soldiers and their families and reduce suicides.

OnPage is proud to have been able to provide this *pro bono* service to Sarah and her team. We look forward to her research results and are happy to support her team.