Patrick Jordan

Amir Jafari

September 6, 2018

Data Science Capstone Pre-proposal
US Veteran's Affairs Suicide Data Project

"To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan." - Abraham Lincoln.

This quote can be found on a plaque inside the main lobby of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in Washington, DC. It is one of the most succinct mission statements in our government, and it was spoken 65 years before the agency was established.

I am a veteran of the United States Army, I served two tours, the first from 1995 - 1999 and again from 2001 - 2006. I actually took my second oath on September 10, 2001. In July of 2006 I was discharged under honorable conditions due to a herniated disk in my back. I truly loved my time in the service, so much so that I continued my service as a civilian in the Federal Government. I can afford the tuition at this University because of my service, and being able to leverage my GI Bill benefits. The VA provides a lot of services to veterans, depending on their status(level of disability), but it does take a lot of navigating the VA system to get evaluated and receive benefits.

My proposed project will explore what many have called the epidemic of the post 9/11 veteran generation, suicide. Recent reports have estimated that 22 veterans commit suicide per day. I would like to compare veterans suicide data by era (World War II, Korea, Vietnam, etc) and see if there is an era where veterans suffered this epidemic more than another. I would also

like to look at the veterans across demographics to include homeless vets to see if there is a pattern, also I would like to look at the veterans zip codes and see if a VA facility was within a defined radius, I would likely start with vets outside of a 50 mile radius and see if there is an increased risk to that population.

I have searched the VA's open data repository and found PDF reports that have data to cover 2008-2015, unfortunately for the scope of this proposed project I will need to collect more data. I have put in a request with the Veterans Affairs to get the data I will need, I have yet to get a response, but I have been persistently following up to get access to the data. If I receive the data in time, I hope to see if I can find a pattern to provide insight into why we are losing men and women who serve at such a rate.