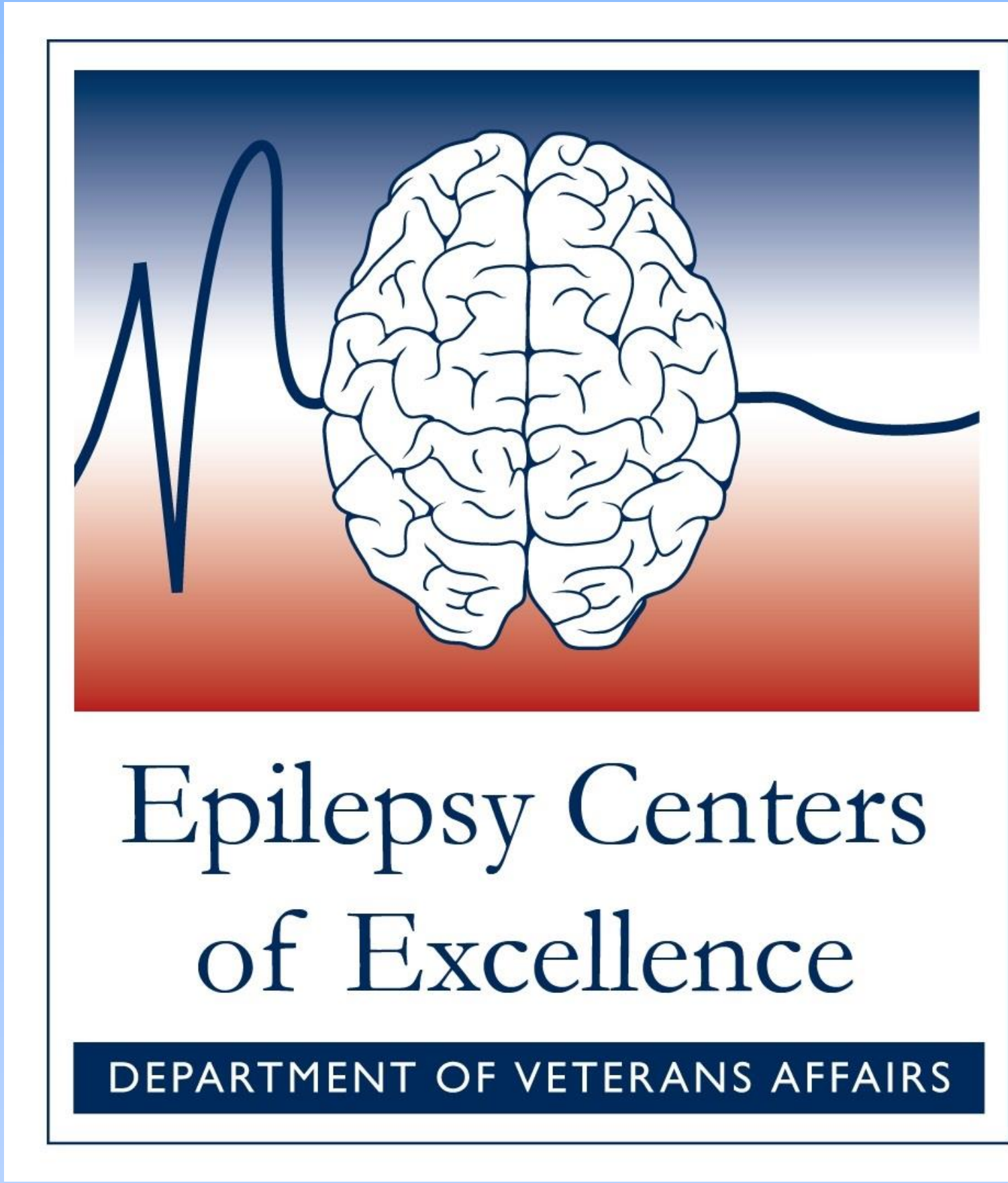


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## Background

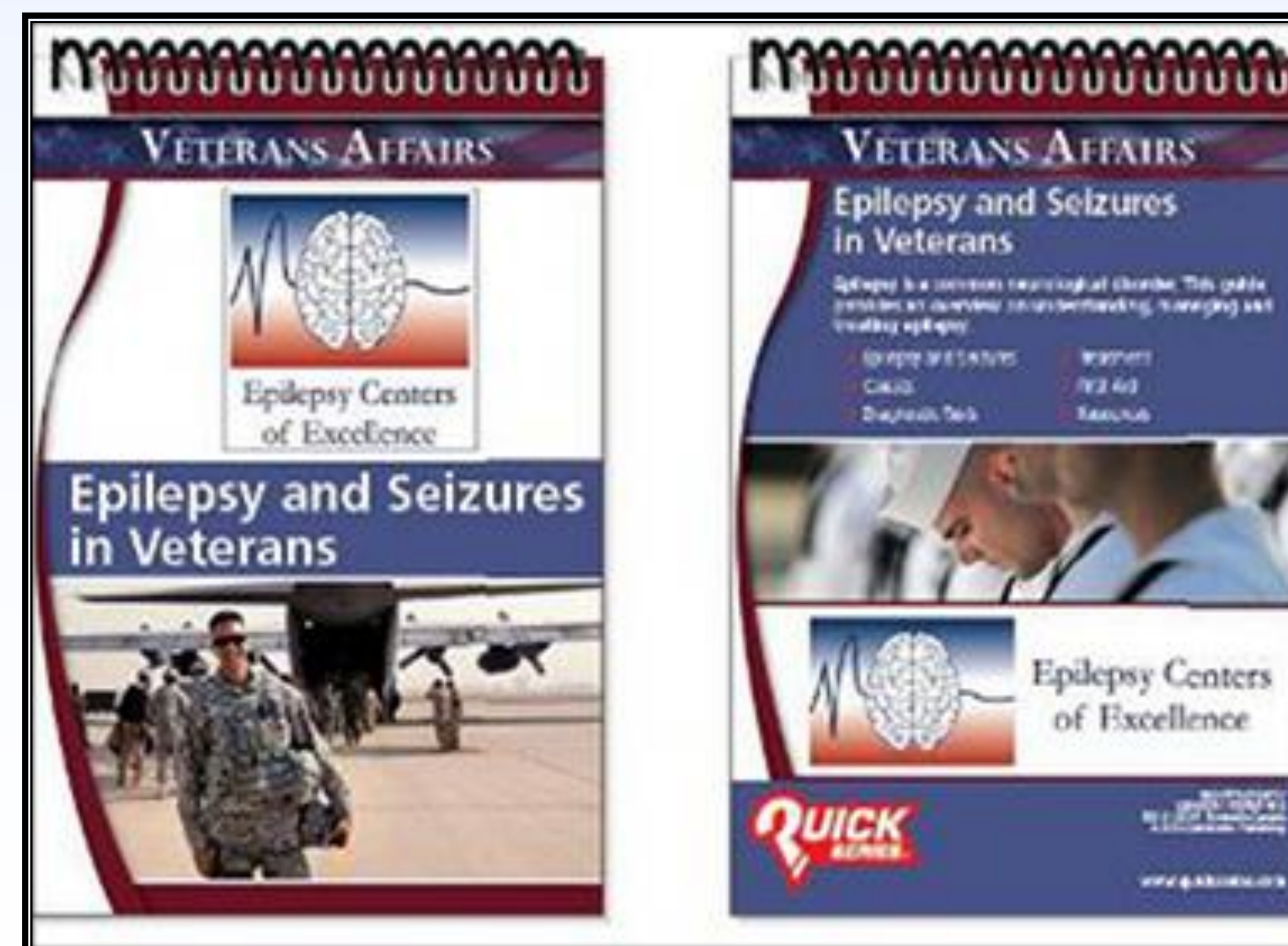
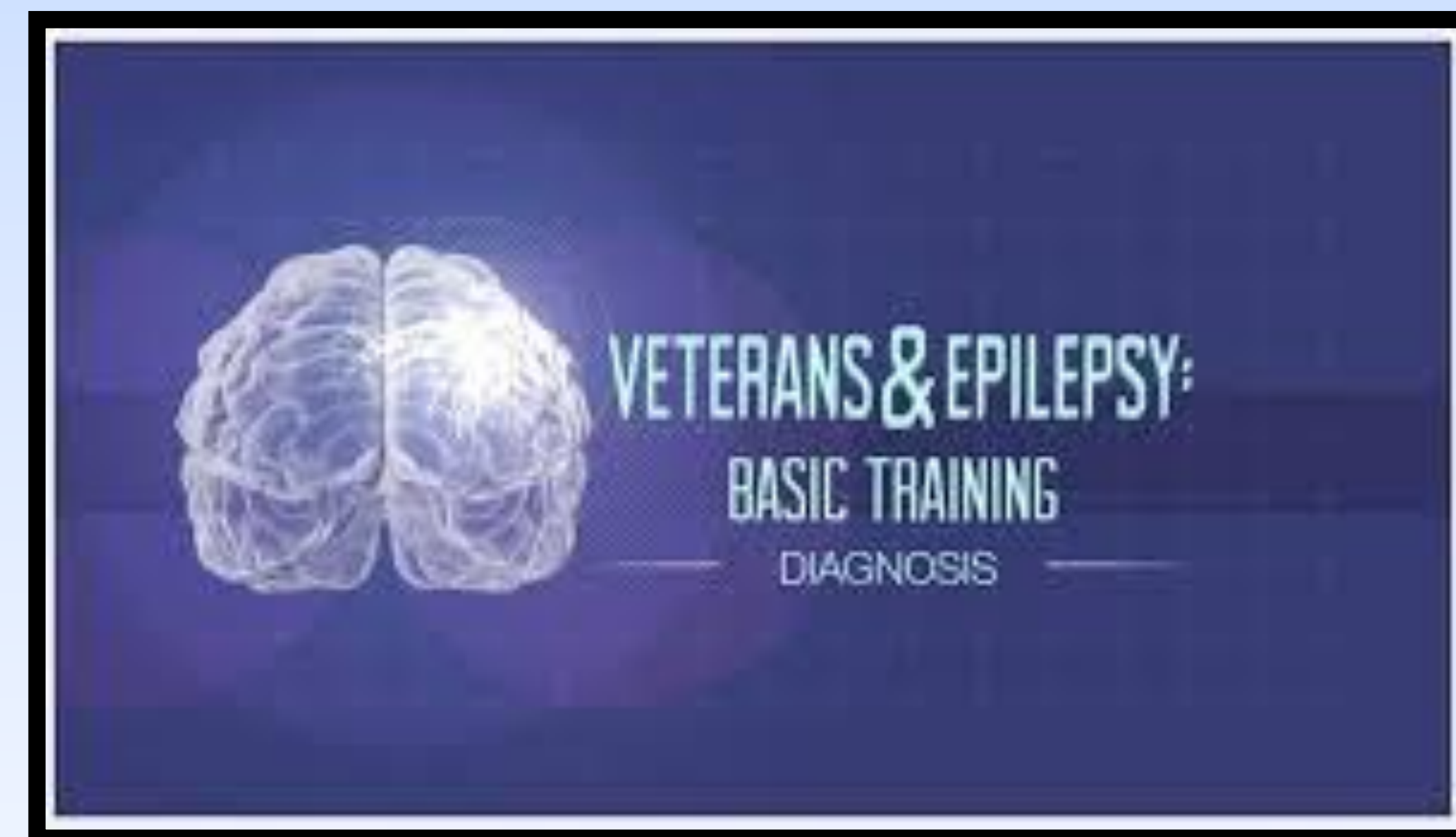
Our project focused on the veteran population with the goal of improving health literacy outcomes among veterans with Epilepsy. There are approximately 3 million people with Epilepsy in America alone. While experts aren't certain how many of them are veterans, they are at an increased risk of developing the disorder. In an effort to remove the stigma associated with Epilepsy and educate those who have it, we developed the "You Are Not Alone" initiative in collaboration with the National Epilepsy Center of Excellence (ECoE). This project is dedicated to providing education that is comprehensive in easily understandable language to ensure Epilepsy literacy for our veterans and their caregivers.

## Goals

- ✓ Determine areas of need by developing a screening tool to assess competency.
- ✓ Incorporate strategies aimed in improving health literacy in veterans with Epilepsy.
- ✓ Increase health literacy in veterans with epilepsy and improve overall patient satisfaction with these patients.

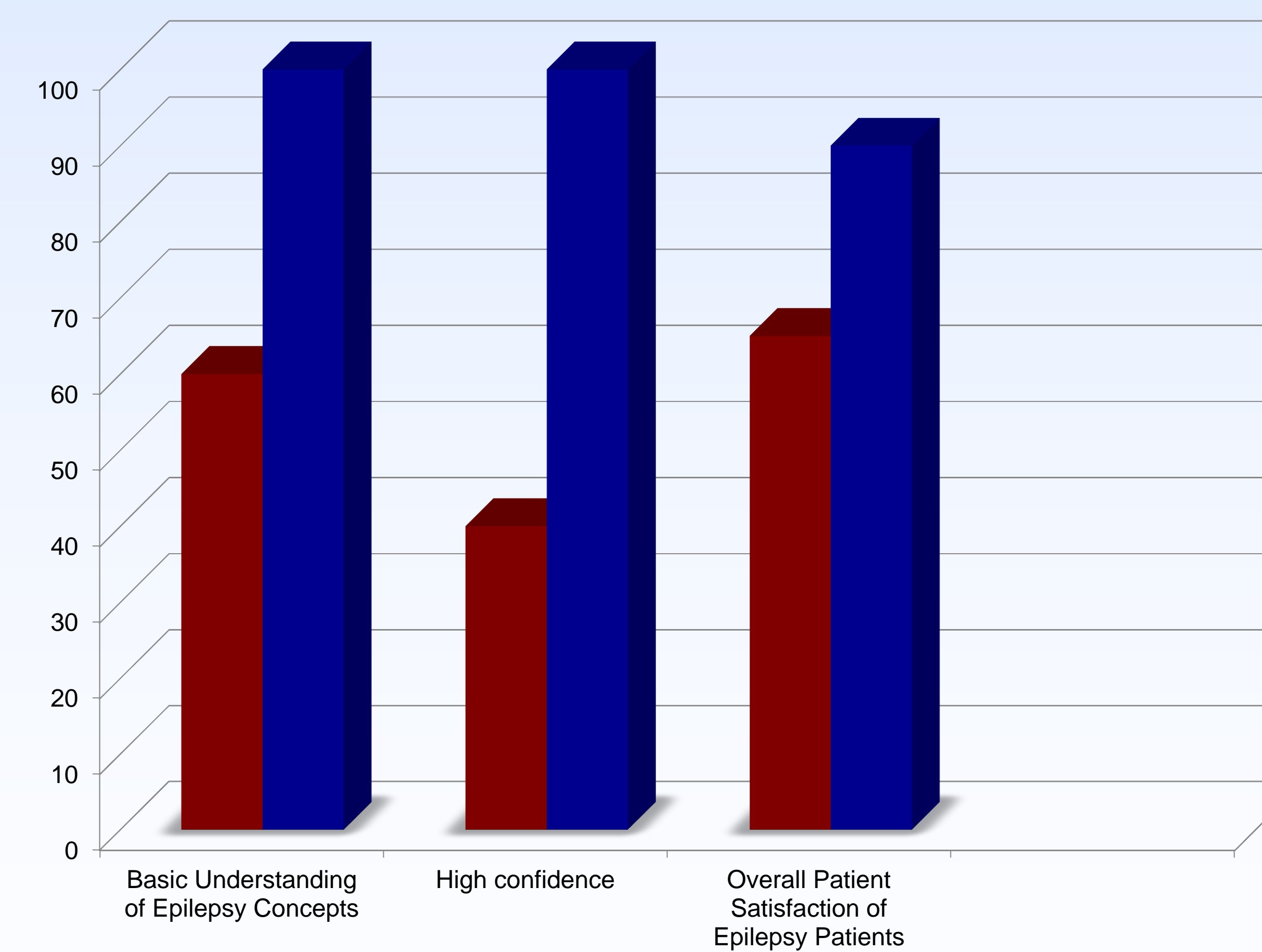
## Methods

This involves comprehensive education and support provided to the veterans because they are at increased risk for disadvantageous outcomes. Before the education was implemented, a screening tool was developed to determine how much the veterans actually understood about Epilepsy. Patients were given a "pre-test" which consisted of True/False questions and scoring to determine how confident they were in their responses. Afterward, the veterans were educated utilizing our program and took a "post-test" after education. It was evident that there was a lack of a standardized process of educating the veterans about epilepsy. This had the potential to threaten the likelihood of successful management with these patients in the future. Educational goals for the patients included being able to define epilepsy using plain language, identifying risk factors, understanding triggers, the importance of medication compliance, and seizure first aid. Educational videos, classes, handouts, and support groups were all included in the initiative. All providers in the ECoE were all well informed about the program and we are able to have continuous outreach.



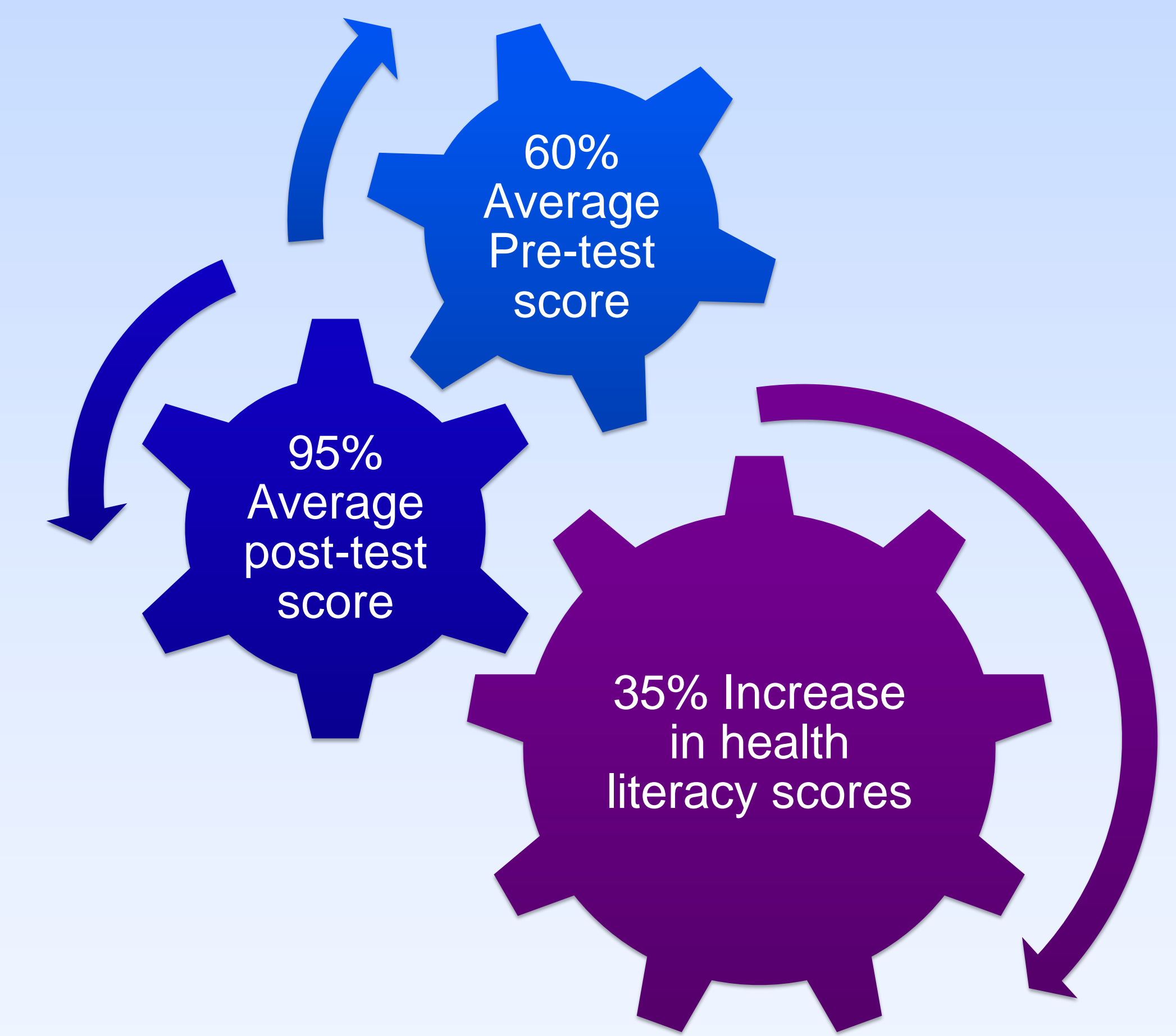
## Outcomes

Before this initiative was implemented, approximately 50% of the patients educated were unaware that Epilepsy is actually not rare. About 3 million Americans have epilepsy and approximately every 2 minutes a new case is diagnosed. However, many of the patients reported feeling alone because they feel as though nobody understood what they experience. By removing the stigma associated with Epilepsy the veterans were able to appreciate that there are people just like them who are able to live full and healthy lives. Prior to developing this education initiative, 60% of the veterans did not fully understand Epilepsy and answered most questions with little to no confidence. Approximately 8% of patients admitted that prior to the comprehensive education method, they had driven when state laws prohibited them from doing so due to lack of understanding. However, post implementation, the patients are able to define epilepsy, identify risk factors, explore potential triggers and how to avoid them, explain the importance of medication compliance, and narrate seizure first aid. 100% of the patients who have been educated with these resources are able to understand Epilepsy with high confidence. Overall satisfaction for Epilepsy patients has also improved and more patients are becoming engaged in the program.



## Conclusion/ Practice Implications

After reviewing the literature, evidence suggests that patients who understand their epilepsy and feel accepted, have improved outcomes. Given the impressive improvement in overall understanding of epilepsy among the patients, it is reasonable to expect that over time the patients will also have more favorable outcomes. We expect to also monitor the progress of these patients to support this theory. Further implication for the "You Are Not Alone" initiative involves the suicide rate among veterans. For those who understand the disorder, concerns still include acceptance, society's attitude toward them, and feeling alone. The suicide rate is 50% higher in veterans than in the civilian population. In addition, the suicide rate is 22% higher among epilepsy patients. It is particularly important that these patients are properly supported and educated because of these risks. These patients are able to become more involved in achieving their optimal health and our offered resources afford them the opportunity to also educate those around them.



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