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Wayne B. Jonas, MD
President and CEO
Samueli Institute

PTSD Symptoms in Combat-Exposed Military Reduced with Healing Touch & Guided Imagery

Healing Touch combined with guided imagery (HT+GI) provides significant clinical reductions in post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms for combat-exposed active duty military, according to a study released in the September issue of *Military Medicine*. The report finds that patients receiving these complementary medicine interventions showed significant improvement in quality of life, as well as reduced depression and cynicism, compared to soldiers receiving treatment as usual alone.

The study, led by the Scripps Center for Integrative Medicine in San Diego, Calif., conducted a randomized controlled trial of returning active-duty Marines at Camp Pendleton, Calif. from 2008 to 2010. Participants were separated at random into two groups, one that received treatment as usual (TAU) for PTSD and another that received TAU as well as HT+GI.

After six sessions within a three-week period with a Scripps practitioner, the HT+GI group reported a significant improvement in PTSD symptoms as a result of these combined complementary therapies.

“Service members are seeking out non-drug complementary and integrative medicine as part of their overall care and approach to wellness,” said Wayne B. Jonas, MD, president and chief executive officer of Samueli Institute. “This treatment pairs deep relaxation with a self-care approach that can be used at home. The results of this study underscore the need to make effective, non-stigmatizing treatments for PTSD available to all our Service members.”

Healing Touch is an energy-based, non-invasive treatment performed by nurses that restores and balances energy to help decrease pain and relieve associated anxiety. Healing Touch is often used as an adjunct to surgery and other medical procedures to assist in pain reduction, relaxation and healing.

Guided imagery is a way of using the imagination to help a person, reduce stress, decrease pain and enhance overall well-being through visualization. For the purposes of this study, guided imagery was administered to the subjects through a recorded CD simultaneously with Healing Touch and then listed to independently by subjects at least once daily.

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