Posttraumatic stress disorder and depression in combat veterans within group based exposure therapy treatment: a correlation between grief and guilt? : a project based upon an investigation at Atlanta Veterans Administration Medical Center, Atlantic, Ga.

Erin Hamilton Richter

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.smith.edu/theses

Part of the Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons

Recommended Citation

This Masters Thesis has been accepted for inclusion in Theses, Dissertations, and Projects by an authorized administrator of Smith ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@smith.edu.
ABSTRACT

This study examines the potential multifaceted relationship between Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), grief, guilt and depression. A sample pool of 32 veterans diagnosed with chronic PTSD volunteered as participants for this study by completing the Posttraumatic stress disorder checklist (PCL), the Beck Inventory for Depression (BDI), the Prolonged Grief Diagnostic tool, and the Traumatic Related Guilt Inventory (TRGI), pre- and post- group based exposure therapy treatment (GBET). Participants for this study were all male veterans, who ranged in ages from 47-64 years old. Twenty of the participants were African American/Black; 11 participants were Caucasian/White; and one participant identified as “other.” A paired t-test was run and a paired correlation test was run to determine the change in PTSD, depression, grief and guilt symptoms pre- and post- GBET to determine if there was a significant relationship (positive or negative) between, PTSD and guilt, PTSD and grief, grief and guilt, depression and guilt and depression and grief. Findings showed that all symptoms decreased after four months of GBET treatment and a relationship was strong between grief and guilt post treatment. A relationship was moderate between grief and depression post treatment and guilt and depression post treatment.
POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER AND DEPRESSION IN COMBAT VETERANS WITHIN GROUP BASED EXPOSURE THERAPY TREATMENT: A CORRELATION BETWEEN GRIEF AND GUILT?

A project based upon an investigation at the Atlanta Veterans Administration Medical Center, Atlanta GA, submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Work.

Erin Hamilton Richter

Smith College School for Social Work
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063

2009
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Narviar Calloway for insightful feedback and her care and attention to the outcome of my thesis.

I also want to thank my sisters and my parents (all four) who helped me by being sounding boards, asking tough questions, and providing me with encouragement and support during this thesis process. I would also like to acknowledge the thoughtfulness and support that the researchers at the VA, specifically David ready and Nathan Mascaro had in the formulation and outcome of this thesis.

Lastly I would like to thank and honor all of the veterans who participated in this research study and worked so hard during the four-month exposure therapy treatment. This research is for the health and stability of the veterans.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................................ ii

TABLE OF CONTENTS ....................................................................................................... iii

LIST OF TABLES ................................................................................................................ iv

CHAPTER

I  INTRODUCTION .............................................................................................................. 1

II  LITERATURE REVIEW ................................................................................................. 3

III  METHODOLOGY ........................................................................................................ 17

IV  FINDINGS .................................................................................................................... 24

V  DISCUSSION .................................................................................................................. 31

REFERENCES ...................................................................................................................... 38

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Agency IRB Approval Letter... ........................................................................ 40
LIST OF TABLES

Table

1. Results of paired t-tests used to determine if there was a difference in grief and guilt scales before and after ................................................................. 26

2. Results of Pearson correlations used to determine if there was a relationship between Grief and the 6 Guilt scales PRE ................................................................. 27

3. Results of Pearson correlations used to determine if there was a relationship between Grief and the 6 Guilt scales POST ................................................................. 28

4. Results of Pearson correlations used to determine if there was a relationship between Grief and Depression (BDI) and Grief and PTSD (PCL) scales (PRE) ........ 29

5. Results of Pearson correlations used to determine if there was a relationship between Guilt (GGS,DSS, GCS) and Depression (BDI) and PTSD (PCL) scales (PRE) ........ 30