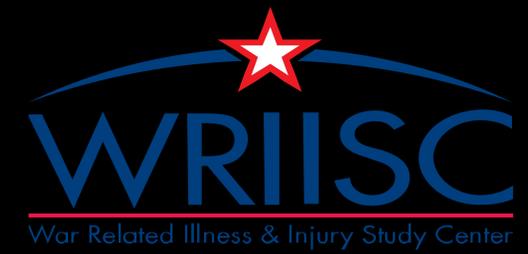




Acupuncture and iRest® Yoga Nidra for Military Veterans: Patient Satisfaction and Self-Reported Symptom Reduction

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BACKGROUND

- The War Related Illness and Injury Study Center in Washington, DC (WRIISC-DC) has provided Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) treatments to Veterans since 2007.
- It is well known that many Veterans of all war eras have a high rate of chronic disease, mental health disorders, and multi-system illnesses (MSI).
- Research has shown that Veterans have complex symptomatology involving physical, cognitive, psychological and behavioral disturbances, such as difficult to diagnose pain patterns, irritable bowel syndrome, chronic fatigue, anxiety, depression, traumatic brain injury (TBI), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), sleep disturbance, or neurocognitive dysfunction.¹⁻⁴
- Standard medical treatments often target isolated disease states such as headaches, insomnia or back pain and at times may miss the more complex, multi-system dysfunction that has been documented in the Veteran population.
- Mindfulness meditation and acupuncture are each broad-spectrum treatments designed to target multiple biological systems simultaneously, and thus, may be well suited for these complex chronic illnesses.
- The emerging literature indicates that CAM approaches augment standard medical treatments to enhance positive outcomes for Veterans with chronic disease, mental health disorders, and MSI.^{5,6}
- Clinical experience at the WRIISC-DC has shown that a holistic approach to care of Veterans with multiple and diverse medical and mental health disorders is beneficial to Veterans and improves quality of life and functional status.

PURPOSE

- Post-deployment health care for military Veterans presents challenges to existing treatment models.
- Currently, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) sees numerous Veterans with chronic, difficult to treat, and medically unexplained symptoms including, but not limited to, fatigue, chronic pain, headaches, gastrointestinal distress, concentration difficulties, disturbed sleep, anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress.
- The VA is increasingly investigating complementary medicine and integrative health care as resources to enhance its provision of patient-centered, empirically-supported care.
- In this study, satisfaction surveys were utilized to better understand patient satisfaction and patient outcomes for Veterans participating in CAM treatments offered through WRIISC-DC.

METHODS

- CAM clinics available through WRIISC-DC:
 - Acupuncture Clinic:
 - Individual acupuncture - Worsley 5-Element model
 - Group auricular acupuncture
 - Yoga Nidra Clinic
 - Integrative Restoration Yoga Nidra Meditation (iRest®)
- Anonymous self-report satisfaction questionnaires were administered periodically throughout the year to a random subset of Veterans in the iRest® Yoga Nidra (n = 184) and acupuncture (n = 130) WRIISC-DC clinics in 2010.

RESULTS:

- The **acupuncture clinic** provided a total of 649 full body and 890 group encounters in 2010.
 - Survey respondents reported complete or partial improvement in symptoms (96%), good to excellent quality of care (99%), and 99% would recommend acupuncture to another Veteran.
- The **yoga nidra clinic** provided a total of 1,318 group encounters in 2010.
 - Survey respondents reported complete or partial improvement in symptoms (95%), very good to excellent quality of care (96%), and 100% would recommend iRest® Yoga Nidra to another Veteran.

Table 1: Acupuncture Satisfaction Data

N = 102	Yes, Completely	Yes, Somewhat	No	Don't Have This Problem
Back Pain	22%	57%	13%	7%
Musculoskeletal Pain	25%	64%	5%	6%
Headaches	28%	47%	6%	19%
Upset Stomach	15%	22%	26%	37%
Constipation/Diarrhea	8%	16%	20%	55%
Trouble Sleeping	26%	51%	18%	5%
Energy Level	32%	53%	11%	4%
Irritability/Angry Outbursts	27%	42%	18%	13%
Concentration	18%	55%	18%	10%
Depression	16%	57%	18%	8%
Anxiety	18%	61%	18%	3%
Jumpy/Easily Startled	19%	56%	18%	7%
Disturbing Memories	18%	46%	28%	8%

Acupuncture Satisfaction Data

- 2010 total encounters
 - 649 individual full body
 - 890 group ear acupuncture
- Improvement in symptoms (n = 103)
 - 45% yes, completely
 - 51% yes, somewhat
 - 3% no improvement
 - <1% too early to tell
- Overall quality (n = 112)
 - 70% excellent
 - 20% very good
 - 10% good
 - <1% poor
- Would recommend to other Veterans (n = 130)
 - 99% yes
 - <1% no

iRest® Yoga Nidra Satisfaction Data

- 2010 total encounters
 - 1,318 sessions
- Improvement in symptoms (n = 165)
 - 10% yes, completely
 - 85% yes, somewhat
 - 4% no improvement
 - <1% don't have symptoms
- Overall quality (n = 184)
 - 66% excellent
 - 30% very good
 - 1% good
 - 2% poor
- Would recommend to other Veterans (n = 184)
 - 100% yes

RESULTS:

Table 2. iRest® Yoga Nidra Satisfaction Data

N = 164	Yes, Completely	Yes, Somewhat	No	Don't Have This Problem
Back Pain	8%	64%	19%	9%
Musculoskeletal Pain	8%	68%	11%	13%
Headaches	10%	41%	16%	33%
Upset Stomach	4%	18%	26%	51%
Constipation/Diarrhea	4%	19%	15%	62%
Trouble Sleeping	9%	72%	13%	6%
Energy Level	12%	72%	12%	4%
Irritability/Angry Outbursts	14%	55%	16%	14%
Concentration	10%	55%	20%	15%
Depression	12%	52%	25%	11%
Anxiety	12%	66%	17%	5%
Jumpy/Easily Startled	9%	52%	22%	17%
Disturbing Memories	13%	45%	26%	16%

Table 3: Direct Quotes from WRIISC-DC Veterans enrolled in the CAM Program

- "I feel more rested after the meditation class than I did after a night of sleeping"
- "Words can't describe how much meditation has helped me and continues to help."
- "Meditation gives you the opportunity to put some space between you and your circumstances and it feels good."
- "The acupuncture program has given me the mental space to help myself get better."
- "I finally have less pain. I didn't believe acupuncture could do that until it happened to me."
- "One acupuncture treatment had a profound effect on the pain in my neck – I couldn't believe it."

CONCLUSIONS

- Satisfaction data suggests that the vast majority of sampled Veterans who received acupuncture and iRest® Yoga Nidra were satisfied with care quality, noticed symptom improvement, and would recommend acupuncture and yoga nidra to other Veterans.
- The WRIISC-DC is in the process of designing research studies to examine the effectiveness of these modalities and how they may best integrate with existing post-deployment health care.

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