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.

METHODS
- • CAM clinics available through WRIISC-DC:
  • Acupuncture Clinic:
    - Individual acupuncture – Wesley 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 (98%), and 100% would recommend iRest® Yoga Nidra to another Veteran.

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.

REFERENCES

Table 1: Acupuncture Satisfaction Data

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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.”