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VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION UPDATE



**Clinician's Trauma Update - Online (6 issues/yr)**

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**CLINICIAN'S TRAUMA UPDATE-Online**  
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For COMPLETE summaries, see this month's CTU-Online PDF  
on our website:  
[http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/newsletters/ctu-online/ctu\\_V7N5.pdf](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/newsletters/ctu-online/ctu_V7N5.pdf)

## Special Notice

**Special Section on DSM-5 in the *Journal of Traumatic Stress*:** The October 2013 issue of *JTS* includes articles and commentaries covering the differences in diagnostic outcome between the *DSM-IV* and the *DSM-V*, the process of reclassifying and revising the PTSD diagnosis, and comparisons between *DSM-5* and the *ICD-11*. Read the issue...[Journal of Traumatic Stress, 26\(5\)](#)

## Treatment

### Prolonged Exposure for combat-related PTSD in older Veterans

Most research on the treatment of PTSD has been conducted with younger and middle-aged adults. The potential effects of cognitive decline and chronic medical conditions on treatment outcome in older adults are unknown. Findings from a study of Prolonged Exposure at the Charleston VA suggest that PE is both safe and effective for older Veterans. [Read more...](#)

### Veteran perspectives on Group-Based Exposure Therapy

Ten years ago, a VA Cooperative Study found minimal benefit of trauma-focused group therapy and no difference from the benefits of present-centered group therapy. However, another group-based exposure protocol has shown promising results in an uncontrolled pilot study. Researchers from the Atlanta and Houston VAMCs recently reported additional outcome data, as well as tolerability and patient perspectives.

[Read more...](#)

## Cognitive Therapy for PTSD in clinical practice

Evaluations of VA's dissemination of trauma-focused psychotherapies indicate that these treatments are effective in clinical settings. Investigators from the United Kingdom hoped to find similar results in their evaluation of one clinic's implementation of Cognitive Therapy for PTSD. [Read more...](#)

## Increased use of psychotherapy in VA mental health care

VA has hired additional mental health professionals and implemented efforts such as national training programs in evidence-based psychotherapies in order to enhance delivery of mental health care to Veterans. A new study by investigators at the Houston VA Medical Center suggests that VA's efforts have been successful in increasing Veterans' use of psychotherapy. [Read more...](#)

## Improved trends in VA prescribing practices—but room for improvement

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors and serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors are the only classes of medications recommended in the VA/DoD Practice Guideline for treating PTSD. Many patients receive different medications “off-label” instead of or in addition to these recommended treatments, perhaps because the recommended treatment was not completely effective or because the patient could not tolerate its side effects. Three recent articles report on prescribing trends in two classes of off-label medications that are widely used in VA: second-generation antipsychotics (SGAs) and benzodiazepines. [Read more...](#)

## Assessment

### Optimal cutpoints for scoring the PTSD Checklist in primary care settings

A 2007 study by researchers from the Charleston VA (see the [August 2007 CTU-Online](#)) indicated that a cutoff score of 31 on the PCL provided an ideal balance between sensitivity (81%) and specificity (81%) in VA primary care patients. A recent study of DoD patients confirmed this finding but new analyses of the VA study suggest that the optimal score varies for different age groups. [Read more...](#)

## Additional Recommended Reading

### Stay up-to-date with four new review articles

VA's implementation of evidence-based psychotherapies; Comprehensive review of gender differences in postdeployment PTSD; Update on medications for comorbid PTSD and substance use disorder; PTSD and suicide in Veterans. [Read more...](#)