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Examining the effects of outdoor recreational experiences on military veterans with PTSD

Submission date
31/01/2020

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
06/02/2020

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
07/06/2023

Condition category
Mental and Behavioural Disorders

[ ] Prospectively registered
[X] Protocol
[ ] Statistical analysis plan
[X] Results
[ ] Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Exposure to the natural environment is increasingly thought to benefit psychological health. Recent reports also suggest that outdoor activities that include recreational pursuits (such as surfing or fishing) coupled with the opportunity to socialize with others in similar circumstances may be helpful to military veterans experiencing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This study will evaluate this possibility.

Who can participate?
Military veterans with a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder

What does the study involve?
Veterans with PTSD will be allocated to either an active outdoor recreational pursuit (angling) or a waitlist control group (this group will receive the intervention at a later date). We will measure changes to their symptoms (PTSD, depression, anxiety and other aspects of well-being) 2 weeks before the intervention, 2 weeks after the intervention for both groups; The waitlist participants will be also be reassessed two weeks after they subsequently completed the intervention and both groups will be followed up 4 months post-intervention.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
The participants for this study are military veterans with PTSD and other anxiety-related issues. They, therefore, have mental health problems but this is a defining aspect of the study and cannot be undertaken with participants without these issues. It is not thought there are any risks in this study above and beyond those normally encountered in everyday life.

It is thought that exposure to an outdoor recreational experience will be beneficial in terms of decreased anxiety, depression and PTSD-symptoms and increased well-being.

Where is the study run from?
Department of Psychology, University of Essex (UK)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
May 2015 to December 2015

Who is funding the study?
This study did not receive any funding

Who is the main contact?
Dr. Nicholas Cooper
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Contact information

Type(s)
Scientific

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Additional identifiers

Clinical Trials Information System (CTIS)
Nil known

ClinicalTrials.gov (NCT)
Nil known

Protocol serial number
Essex_NC1408_2

Study information

Scientific Title
Examining the effects of outdoor recreational experiences on the mental health and well-being of military veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD): a randomized controlled trial

Study objectives
It is hypothesized that participants in the intervention group will experience a reduction in PTSD-related symptomology and an increase in subjective well-being relative to participants in a wait list control group, as a consequence of a short, outdoor, recreational activity.

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 28/08/2014, the University of Essex Ethics Committee (Science & Health Ethics Sub-Committee, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, CO4 3SQ; reo-governance@essex.ac.uk; +44 (0) 1206 87356), ref: NC1408

Study design
Randomized waitlist-controlled trial

Primary study design
Interventional

Study type(s)
Treatment

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Interventions
The intervention is designed to deliver an outdoor recreational activity (fishing) in a peer group context and to facilitate opportunities to socialize and to discuss military experience or PTSD experience if the participant so wishes. The intervention lasts 2 days (1 night) and will take place at a rural, lakeside location.

Participants will be randomly allocated to one of the two levels of the between-groups factor (to either active intervention or waitlist control). They will be sequentially numbered and allocated to condition by means of an online blocked randomization tool.

Each participant will complete questionnaires to assess their PTSD, depression, anxiety, and stress. The intervention group participants will be given these at 2 weeks before they receive the intervention, at 2 weeks following the intervention. The waitlist participants will be also be assessed at baseline and four weeks later. The waitlist group will also be reassessed two weeks after they subsequently completed the intervention. Both groups will be followed up 4 months post-intervention.

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
1. PTSD symptoms assessed by the PCL-5 at baseline, 2 weeks and 4 months
2. Depression assessed by the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) at baseline, 2 weeks and 4 months
3. Anxiety assessed by the General Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7) at baseline, 2 weeks and 4 months

Key secondary outcome(s))
1. Perceived stress assessed by the 10-item Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) at baseline, 2 weeks and 4 months
2. General social functioning assessed by the Work and Social Adjustment scale (WSAS) at baseline, 2 weeks and 4 months

3. Positive change in psychological growth assessed by the Psychological Wellbeing Post-Traumatic Changes Questionnaire (PWB-PTCQ) at baseline, 2 weeks and 4 months

Completion date
18/12/2015

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Military veteran
2. Diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Participant type(s)
Other

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
All

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
18

Key exclusion criteria
Currently receiving psychological therapy for PTSD

Date of first enrolment
13/07/2015

Date of final enrolment
27/07/2015

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
Department of Psychology, University of Essex
Wivenhoe Park

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Sponsor information

Organisation
University of Essex

ROR
https://ror.org/02nkf1q06

Funder(s)

Funder type
Not defined

Funder Name
investigator initiated and funded

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study will be stored in a publically available repository. Our data are stored in an online repository OSF Home. https://osf.io/63hrb/?view_only=2c8ffabdc8a64e77ba649c47f6df6c75 .
Data are de-identified participant data (IPD) and age and gender removed from the data sets because the small sample size risks identification. The data can be downloaded by anyone with the link. The link will also be provided in the published paper.

IPD sharing plan summary
Stored in repository

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Results article	results	25/11/2020	26/01/2021	Yes	No
Participant information sheet	Participant information sheet	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes
Protocol (other)			28/03/2023	No	No