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Examining the effects of outdoor recreational experiences on military veterans with PTSD: a pilot study

Submission date
31/01/2020

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
06/02/2020

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
28/03/2023

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?
Three groups of veterans with PTSD will each undertake a group outdoor activity (angling, equine care or archery and falconry). We will measure changes to their symptoms (PTSD, depression, anxiety) 2 weeks before the activity, 2 weeks after the activity, and at 4 month follow up.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
Equine husbandry: There is some risk around horses. We will be working to the garrison stables health and safety guidelines and all participants are covered by the stables' indemnity insurance, in case of an injury occurring. There will be a first aid trained member of staff in attendance at all times.

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?
June 2014 to June 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

Protocol serial number
Essex_NC1408_1

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 pilot study

Study objectives
It is hypothesized that participants will experience a reduction in PTSD-related symptomology and an increase in subjective well-being as a consequence of a short, outdoor, recreational activity.

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 01/03/2015, 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: MW1502, MW1503

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Single-centre interventional design study

Study type(s)
Treatment

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

Interventions
Participants will be recruited and randomly allocated to one of the three levels of the between-groups factor. They will be sequentially numbered and allocated to condition by means of an online blocked randomization tool.

The three intervention groups are angling, equine husbandry, and falconry and archery. The three different activity interventions will run sequentially and employ the same eligibility criteria, recruitment process, and evaluation. Each activity intervention lasts 1 to 2 days and are designed to deliver professional coaching in an outdoor recreational activity in a peer group context and to facilitate opportunities to socialize and to discuss military experience or PTSD experience if the participant so wishes.

Each participant will complete questionnaires to assess their PTSD, depression, anxiety, and stress. These will be given at 2 weeks before they receive the intervention, at 2 weeks following the intervention and at 4 months follow up.

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
1. PTSD symptoms assessed by the PTSD Checklist Military (PCL-M) 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)
Perceived stress assessed by the 10-item Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) at baseline, 2 weeks and 4 months

Completion date

08/06/2015

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
30

Key exclusion criteria
Currently receiving psychological therapy for PTSD

Date of first enrolment
28/08/2014

Date of final enrolment
08/03/2015

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
Department of Psychology, University of Essex
Wivenhoe Park
Colchester
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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
Protocol (other)			28/03/2023	No	No