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Using angling to improve mental health in military veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder

Submission date
27/05/2022

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
07/06/2022

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
13/07/2022

Condition category
Mental and Behavioural Disorders

[ ] Prospectively registered
[ ] Protocol
[ ] Statistical analysis plan
[ ] Results
[ ] Individual participant data
[ ] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
The aim of this study is to test whether angling in a natural and social setting will improve the mental health of military veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Anyone who has experienced a traumatic event or episode in their life might develop PTSD but it is particularly noted in military veterans who have seen combat. PTSD is characterised by persistently feeling under threat and experiencing vivid memories, nightmares and 'flashbacks' of the trauma that may occur at any time.
Many people with PTSD avoid thinking or talking about their trauma, and situations that could provoke anxiety. This often results in losing partners, friends and employment. Despite this, people with PTSD, especially military veterans, often do not seek help or drop out early if they do. The aim of this study is to evaluate a new, engaging way to help people with PTSD recover their wellbeing. The researchers have worked with veterans who have lived with PTSD for many years and with veterans' support charities to develop a new intervention.

Who can participate?
Military veterans with PTSD

What does the study involve?
The new intervention involves learning to fish and socialising in small groups in a tranquil, rural setting. It takes place over the course of 2 days and 1 night. The idea behind this approach is threefold: First, being amongst people with similar experiences makes it easier to share concerns and memories. Second, natural environments are restorative and free from attention-grabbing triggers (such as unpredictable urban sounds that trigger flashbacks). Third, developing a skill encourages post-traumatic growth.

What are the potential risks and benefits of taking part?
The benefits may include a decrease in symptoms associated with PTSD and other conditions such as anxiety and depression and an increase in a positive feeling of wellbeing and collegiality.

Risks include the usual hazards associated with being outside in nature by the waterside (e.g. slips, trips and falls; waterside safety; immersion in water; waterborne infections; exposure to animal waste; thunder and lightning).

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

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
January 2022 to November 2022

Who is funding the study?
National Institute for Health Research (UK)

Who is the main contact?
Dr Nick Cooper
anglingforgood@essex.ac.uk

Contact information

Type(s)
Principal investigator

Contact name
Dr Nicholas Cooper

Contact details
Department of Psychology
University of Essex
Wivenhoe Park
Colchester
United Kingdom
CO4 3SQ
+44 (0)7791 518833
ncooper@essex.ac.uk

Additional identifiers

National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR)
203435

Study information

Scientific Title
A nature-based intervention to improve mental health: efficacy of an angling intervention for military veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder

Study objectives
A nature-based, group-delivered angling intervention improves the mental health of military veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) relative to controls.

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 14/03/2022, University of Essex Ethics Committee (REO Research Governance Team, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, CO4 3SQ, UK; +44 (0)1206 872169; reo-governance@essex.ac.uk), ref: ETH2122-0861

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Single-centre interventional single-blinded randomised wait-list controlled trial

Study type(s)
Treatment

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

Interventions
Participants engage in a 2-days/1-night social fishing event in a natural setting. Participants are randomised into either the fishing group or a waitlist control group (do nothing during primary data collection), who then engage in the fishing intervention at a later date. Simple randomisation is used with stratification (gender, PCL-5 score).

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
PTSD symptoms measured using the Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Checklist for DSM-5 (PCL-5) at baseline, 2 weeks and 4 weeks post intervention.

Key secondary outcome(s)
Measured at baseline, 2 weeks and 4 weeks post intervention:
1. Anxiety measured with the Generalised Anxiety Disorder Assessment (GAD-7)
2. Depression measured with the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ)-9
3. Psychological growth measured using the Psychological Wellbeing Post-Traumatic Changes Questionnaire
4. General social functioning measured using the Work and Social Adjustment scale
5. Wellbeing measured using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale
6. Loneliness measured using the UCLA Loneliness Scale and the emotional Loneliness Scale

Completion date
07/11/2022

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
Military veteran with PTSD

Participant type(s)
Patient

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Adult

Sex
All

Key exclusion criteria
1. Not a military veteran
2. Currently undergoing psychotherapy

Date of first enrolment
06/06/2022

Date of final enrolment
08/08/2022

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
University of Essex
Wivenhoe Park
Colchester
United Kingdom
CO4 3SQ

Sponsor information

Organisation
University of Essex

ROR
https://ror.org/02nkf1q06

Funder(s)

Funder type
Government

Funder Name
National Institute for Health Research

Alternative Name(s)
National Institute for Health Research, NIHR Research, NIHRresearch, NIHR - National Institute for Health Research, NIHR (The National Institute for Health and Care Research), NIHR

Funding Body Type
Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype
National government

Location
United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
Anonymised data will be shared in a publically available repository, the OSF data repository (https://osf.io/). The researchers will store fully anonymised raw SPSS data files. Consent for this is in the PIS and ethics forms. Data will be available after publication and will be freely available at any time thereafter from OSF.

IPD sharing plan summary
Stored in publicly available repository

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Study website	Study website	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes