

Clinic uses exercise to combat post-traumatic stress disorder and depression

July 28 2015, by Amanda Weaver

With post-traumatic stress disorder affecting almost one million Australians every year, QUT Health Clinics and the White Cloud Foundation have today launched a free clinic of exercise training for sufferers.

QUT's Faculty of Health Executive Dean Ross Young said [exercise](#) intervention for people with [post-traumatic stress disorder](#) (PTSD) and depression can be highly effective.

"The Australian Centre for Post Traumatic Mental Health (Phoenix Australia) estimates that up to 10 per cent of people will experience PTSD at some time in their life," Professor Young said.

"PSTD and depression are most common among military veterans and emergency service men and women and is associated with symptoms including anxiety, weight gain, metabolic syndrome, and unhealthy lifestyle choices. Victims of violent assault and survivors of serious accidents and natural disasters are also at risk.

"QUT Health Clinics and the White Cloud Foundation have partnered to provide former or current military personnel and emergency service men or women with an exercise clinic and intervention to treat PTSD or depression symptoms.

"Exercise has recently been evaluated and was demonstrated to be successful in reducing PSTD symptoms.

Professor Young said program participants would undergo an initial assessment, followed by 10 weeks of weekly individualised and supervised [exercise training](#).

A personalised exercise plan will be developed for each participant based on the results of a physical and health assessment and their desired health goals," Professor Young said.

"The training will run for 60 minutes and include a combination of resistance and aerobic exercise. The assessments and training will involve participation by fourth year QUT clinical exercise physiology students overseen by an Accredited Exercise Physiologist and clinical educator."

Professor Adam Scott, Founder and Chairman of the White Cloud Foundation said the organisation is focussed on creating early access to treatment by developing and implementing coordinated models of healthcare for people living with, or at risk of developing depression.

"By initiating this [exercise physiology](#) program with QUT we are creating another way in which we can tackle PTSD and depression," Professor Scott said.

"PTSD often leads to depression and can result in unhealthy decision making and actions. Exercise provides a physical outlet and means to hopefully change those patterns."

Ben Roberts-Smith, VC and White Cloud Foundation Patron, said PTSD was finally receiving long-overdue recognition and a variety of treatment options were increasingly available.

"Serving and returned soldiers are particularly vulnerable to PTSD but it can affect a wide range of people of all ages and as a society we need to

address it; for the sake of the sufferers but also their families," Mr Roberts-Smith said.

"This venture between QUT and the White Cloud Foundation is an important step in recognising and addressing a debilitating condition that cannot be ignored."

PTSD and [depression symptoms](#) and behaviours include:

- re-living the traumatic event through having unwanted thoughts or images come to mind;
- being highly alert or wound up;
- avoiding reminders of the event;
- feeling emotionally numb (beyond feeling a bit down);
- difficulty sleeping;
- hopelessness;
- lack of motivation;
- inability to concentrate; and
- being unusually irritable or angry

The PTSD/depression clinic is open to former or current military personnel and emergency service men or women referred or self-referred with a diagnosis of, or who identifies as having:

- post-traumatic stress disorder and/or depression;
- symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and/or depression; and
- a high risk of post-traumatic stress disorder and/or [depression](#).

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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