

Innovative eye-movement treatment found to help post-traumatic stress sufferers

October 10 2014, by Hayley Mayne



(Medical Xpress)—A combined research project by two universities has shown that an innovative treatment that involves rapid eye movements is reducing the symptoms of post-traumatic stress in trauma patients.

Senior Lecturer in Psychology, Dr Chris Lee from Murdoch University and Professor of Clinical Psychology, Dr Pim Cuijpers from VU University Amsterdam have received an Outstanding Research Award from the Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing International Association (EDMRIA) for their work.

Rapid eye movement [therapy](#) involves the patient focusing on their trauma while their therapist facilitates their eyes to move rapidly from

side-to-side.

Dr Lee and Dr Cuijpers analysed data from a number of previous bodies of research into this unique form of therapy.

"We found that people treated with eye movement therapy had greater improvement in their symptoms of [post-traumatic stress disorder](#) than people given therapy without eye movements," Dr Lee said.

"Secondly we found that in laboratory studies the evidence concludes that thinking of upsetting memories and simultaneously doing a task that facilitates [eye movements](#) reduces the vividness and distress associated with the upsetting memories."

Their research "A meta-analysis of the contribution of eye movement in processing emotional memories" has been published in the *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry*.

Mark Doherty, Executive Director of EMDRIA, said the Outstanding Research Award reflects the commitment and dedication Dr Lee and Dr Cuijpers have demonstrated to EMDR research.

"This honor goes to researchers who have completed published studies that have significantly advanced the knowledge base of EMDR," Mr Doherty said.

More information: Lee, C.W. and Cuijpers, P. (2013) "A meta-analysis of the contribution of eye movements in processing emotional memories." *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry*, 44 (2). pp. 231-239.

Provided by Murdoch University

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