

Study: New treatment method helps reduce suicide risk among military and veterans

February 14 2024



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Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is common among U.S. military veterans. It's also linked with a higher risk of suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

A study led by researchers with The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center and College of Medicine found that crisis response planning (CRP) can help. This brief intervention quickly reduced [suicidal thoughts](#) among patients receiving daily therapy for two weeks for PTSD. This type of therapy is called "cognitive processing therapy," or CPT.

"This study shows that crisis response planning can rapidly reduce suicide risk. It is the first study to prove this technique works when used during massed therapy for PTSD," said principal investigator Craig J. Bryan, PsyD. He is a [clinical psychologist](#), professor, and director of the Division of Recovery and Resilience at Ohio State's Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health.

Findings are published online in the [*Journal of Anxiety Disorders*](#).

Researchers randomly assigned 157 U.S. military members and veterans to receive CRP or self-guided safety planning (SP) before starting massed CPT.

Study participants had one-hour virtual or in-person therapy sessions for 10 days in a row in outpatient [clinical settings](#) as part of Ohio State's Suicide and Trauma Reduction Initiative (STRIVE). This schedule is called "massed" therapy.

Key findings include:

- CRP is a low-cost and effective way to reduce suicide risk among patients with PTSD.
- The severity of suicidal thoughts after CRP was about half of that in SP.
- Fewer participants in CRP reported attempting suicide.

"Next, we want to learn if using CRP with other treatments can similarly reduce suicidal thoughts and [suicide attempts](#) across patient groups and clinic types," said lead author Justin Baker. He is an assistant professor in Ohio State's Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Health and clinical director of the STRIVE Program.

More information: Craig J. Bryan et al, Crisis response planning rapidly reduces suicidal ideation among U.S. military veterans receiving massed cognitive processing therapy for PTSD, *Journal of Anxiety Disorders* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.janxdis.2023.102824](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2023.102824)

Provided by Ohio State University Medical Center

Citation: Study: New treatment method helps reduce suicide risk among military and veterans (2024, February 14) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-02-treatment-method-suicide-military-veterans.html>

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