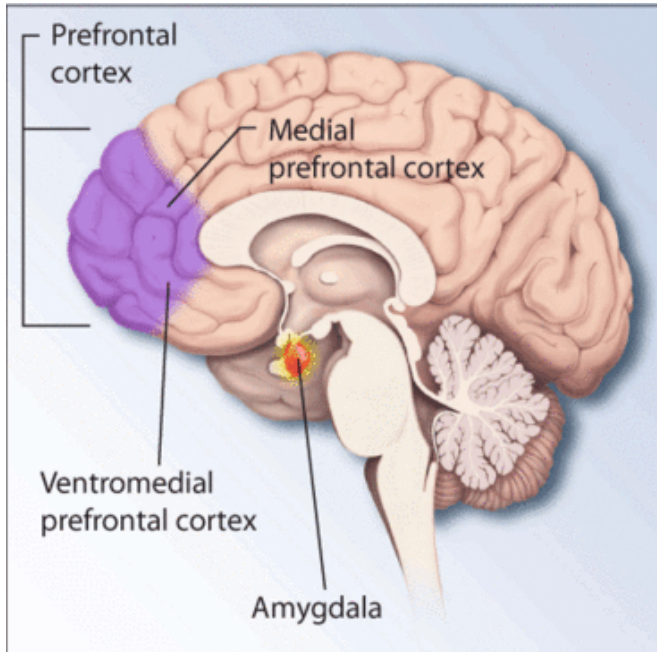


Investigating effectiveness of new PTSD treatment

20 July 2017



Regions of the brain associated with stress and posttraumatic stress disorder. Credit: National Institutes of Health

A novel approach of using visual and physical stimulus to help military veterans address their traumatic experiences could soon play a significant role in helping British veterans overcome post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), thanks to a new Cardiff University research project.

Funded by the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) and supported by Health and Care Research Wales, the study is seeking to help veterans who have not responded to current PTSD treatments.

The two-year study is investigating the effectiveness of a new therapy known as 3MDR, where patients walk on a treadmill whilst interacting with a series of self-selected images that are related to their trauma, and displayed on a

large screen. The aim of this therapy is to help patients learn how to move through their avoidance by, literally, approaching their [traumatic memories](#).

Psychological therapy with a focus on the traumatic event is the [treatment](#) of choice for PTSD and can be very helpful but, unfortunately, treatment resistance is high. Preliminary results from research conducted in the Netherlands suggest that 3MDR may help veterans with treatment resistant, combat-related PTSD. The aim of the new study is to determine the efficacy of 3MDR in the treatment of British [military veterans](#) with treatment-resistant and combat-related PTSD and to explore what factors influence outcome.

Led by Professor Jonathan Bisson of the Institute of Psychological Medicine and Clinical Neurosciences at Cardiff University's School of Medicine, the study is being carried out in a specially designed laboratory, with the trial therapy being delivered to veterans in contact with Veterans NHS Wales. The researchers hope that exposure to traumatic memories, enhanced with walking, music and high effect pictures, will eliminate cognitive avoidance – a coping strategy that can contribute to the worsening of PTSD symptoms.

Professor Jonathan Bisson, Institute of Psychological Medicine and Clinical Neurosciences at Cardiff University School of Medicine, said: "There is an urgent need to identify effective treatments for military veterans who do not respond to, or are unable to engage with, current first line treatments.

"Around 4 percent of British military veterans suffer from PTSD, which often causes significant distress to them and those around them, along with considerable financial and social impact. This new method of treatment could offer new hope for veterans with PTSD who are currently facing the prospect of life with a chronic and enduring disorder."

Ray Lock CBE, Chief Executive of Forces in Mind Trust, added: "Improving our understanding of veterans' mental health and effective treatments has been a priority of the Forces in Mind Trust since the Trust's inception. PTSD has a major impact on the quality of life of a small minority of veterans and it is important that we look at new and viable ways of helping some of those people whose mental health issues can be the hardest to treat. This is an exciting and innovative approach justifying further exploration which we are very pleased to support."

During the study, researchers are regularly assessing the symptoms of PTSD in patients receiving treatment in order to measure its clinical efficacy. The findings will be presented in a report at the end of the project.

Provided by Cardiff University

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