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Community Resources

afterdeployment.org

<http://afterdeployment.org/>

Returning Service Members (OEF/OIF)

<http://www.oefoif.va.gov/>

National Center for PTSD

<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/Veterans/>



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Lithium Augmentation for Hyperarousal Symptoms of PTSD: Pilot Study

COMIRB # 10-1170



CURRENT RESEARCH: Lithium treatment for combat PTSD

Veterans Integrated Service
Network (VISN) 19 Mental Illness
Research, Education, and Clinical
Center (MIRECC)

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Study Description & Background

Few evidence-based treatment options exist for patients with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) inadequately responsive to standard medication treatments, such as treatment with serotonin specific reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs).

Although many agents have been studied in the management of PTSD, treatment augmentation with lithium remains almost wholly unexplored. Potential benefits of lithium include a broad clinical utility; reported clinical benefits for aggression, suicidality, and mood; and positive effects on brain areas that can be affected by PTSD.

Recent estimates suggest that 14% of Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) service members will suffer from symptoms of PTSD.¹ Since 1997, the average annual growth in all users of VA specialty mental health services has averaged 37,000 Veterans per year, including 22,000 per year with PTSD.² There is a clear need to better characterize PTSD refractory to standard treatments and to expand the therapeutic arsenal available to patients and clinicians managing this disorder.

References

¹Tanielian T, Jaycox, LH, eds. *Invisible wounds of war: Psychological and cognitive injuries, their consequences, and services to assist recovery*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp.; 2008

²Rosenheck RA, Fontana AF. Recent trends in VA treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental disorders. *Health Aff (Millwood)* 2007;26:1720-7.

Hypotheses, Study Aims, & Short-term Goals

Primary aim:

- 1) Establish the safety and tolerability of lithium augmentation of psychopharmacological treatment as usual for combat Veterans with PTSD.

Exploratory aim:

- 1) Preliminarily investigate the efficacy of lithium augmentation for hyperarousal symptoms of PTSD, overall PTSD symptom severity, and suicidality among combat Veterans with PTSD.

Progress Report

We are currently recruiting and enrolling participants for this study.

Future Study & Putting Research into Practice

We hope that findings will establish the tolerability and safety of lithium augmentation for PTSD symptoms in combat Veterans, and collect evidence suggesting effectiveness for hyperarousal and suicidality in the context of PTSD.

Additionally, we hope that preliminary data will provide justification for future study designed to further explore lithium's potential role in PTSD.

Because of the extensive clinical experience that already exists with lithium, positive findings supporting the use of lithium to treat PTSD could be incorporated easily and rapidly into clinical practice, helping many Veterans with PTSD who currently respond inadequately to existing treatment options.

