South Texas Research Organizational Network Guiding Studies on Trauma And Resilience – STRONG STAR

STRONG STAR is a multidisciplinary and multi-institutional research consortium funded by the U.S. Department of Defense’s Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury Research Program to develop and evaluate the most effective early interventions possible for the detection, prevention, and treatment of combat-related posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in active-duty military personnel and recently discharged veterans.

Under the leadership of The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio and based in South-Central Texas, the STRONG STAR Consortium brings together the expertise of a world-class team of military, civilian and VA institutions and investigators and one of the largest populations of active-duty and recently discharged Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom combat veterans in the nation.

With the critical mass of talent required to make major scientific advances in military PTSD research, STRONG STAR investigators hope to improve countless lives by preventing the onset of chronic PTSD in a new generation of veterans.

Why is STRONG STAR a great resource for service members and veterans?

- Evidence-based PTSD treatments tailored to meet the unique needs of service members and recently discharged veterans
- Treatments focus on PTSD and common co-occurring conditions, including alcohol use and relationship problems
- Operating in San Antonio at SAMMC, Wilford Hall, the VA, and the UT Health Science Center
- Convenient scheduling with highly qualified staff
- Ideal for active duty who want to continue in military careers, and for veterans who want to maintain healthy, productive civilian lives

For more information on STRONG STAR and its treatment studies in San Antonio

Contact us at (210) 562-6726 or visit www.strongstar.org

www.STRONGSTAR.org
STRONG STAR Treatment Studies in San Antonio

Research shows that two psychological therapies are particularly effective in treating posttraumatic stress disorder, or PTSD: Prolonged Exposure (PE) and Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT). Studies with civilians have shown that, for the vast majority of patients, these therapies can be used to treat PTSD to the point of remission, and the reoccurrence of symptoms is rare.

Are these treatments equally as effective for combat-related PTSD? Do they need to be tailored in any way to make them more effective for—our service members and veterans? What effect can and do they have on commonly co-occurring problems such as alcohol dependence and relationship problems?

These are questions STRONG STAR is trying to answer through several ongoing clinical trials in the San Antonio area.

The Dual-Diagnosis Study: Treatment for PTSD and Alcohol Dependence

This study is looking at the effectiveness of the only FDA-approved medication for the long-term treatment of PTSD—selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)—when used in combination with cognitive-behavioral therapy. Researchers aim to identify predictors of how an individual will respond to SSRI treatment, giving clinicians a valuable tool to assess who will or will not benefit from this medication.

**Study Sites:** South Texas Veterans Health Care System (also offered at the Central Texas VA in Waco)

Clinical Effectiveness Trial of In-Home Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) for Combat-Related PTSD

This study offers intervention for veterans with PTSD utilizing traditional face-to-face in-office therapy as well as two different formats of in-home therapy: face-to-face in-home therapy and tele-behavioral health in-home therapy. This approach seeks to extend the reach of CPT to underserved populations, including veterans who may be reluctant or unable to seek care through the VA and/or military treatment facilities.

**Study Site:** University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio

Treatment for Combat-Related PTSD in Primary Care Settings

In an effort to overcome barriers faced by military personnel who need mental health care for PTSD, this study is evaluating a brief cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) for PTSD delivered by mental health providers working in the primary care setting. The treatment program includes interventions from both Prolonged Exposure and Cognitive Processing Therapy that have proven effective in the mental health setting, but these methods have been adapted for use in the time-constrained environment of primary care.

**Study Sites:** Wilford Hall Ambulatory Surgical Center; San Antonio Military Medical Center

Individual vs. Couples’ Treatment for Combat-Related PTSD

This study is comparing the effectiveness of traditional Prolonged Exposure therapy, an evidence-based therapy that involves only the individual service member, to Cognitive-Behavioral Couples Therapy (CBCT), which involves the service member and spouse. CBCT also incorporates behavioral communication skills with traditional aspects of Cognitive Processing Therapy to address both individual and couple-level distress.

**Study Sites:** Wilford Hall Ambulatory Surgical Center; San Antonio Military Medical Center

Goals of STRONG STAR Therapies for Participants

- Improve understanding of PTSD
- Reduce overall stress levels
- Reduce the severity of PTSD symptoms
- Decrease depression, anxiety, guilt/shame, anger
- Improve social functioning and day-to-day living

For more information

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Photo Courtesy of U.S. Army