

PTSD AMONG MILITARY PERSONNEL: ACUPUNCTURE WORKS!

Jennifer G. Strong, R.Ac. (Dr. TCM-Alberta), M.Ac.&O.M., Diplomate Acupuncture (NCCAOM)

Returning from a tour of duty in Bosnia, Robert * felt anxious, hypervigilant, depressed and often woke-up in a cold sweat after intense nightmares. He and his wife were not getting along, and he had increasing trouble managing his life. At his wife's insistence, Robert sought help and was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). He joined a support group, saw a psychotherapist and received acupuncture treatment.

PTSD is an emotional response to deeply disturbing situations or events. Lt.-Gen. Roméo Dallaire began showing symptoms of PTSD shortly after his return from Rwanda in 1994. With treatment, he now enjoys life and speaks publicly about his battle with PTSD, helping to dispel common stigma. With additional exposures, individuals are more likely to develop PTSD.

Among veterans returning from Bosnia, PTSD rates are 12-13% according to Dr. Greg Passey, a Vancouver psychiatrist who works with Canadian Forces patients¹. A Veteran's Affairs statement reveals that PTSD rates among former soldiers has more than tripled since Canada first deployed troops to Afghanistan², and according to the military ombudsman's office, are as high as 20%¹.

The U.S. National Institutes of Health funded a study at the University of New Mexico to examine the efficacy of acupuncture as treatment for PTSD³, published in *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, June 2007⁴. Dr. Michael Hollifield, an associate professor of psychiatry and the study's principal investigator said, "To date, our research supports using acupuncture for treating PTSD symptoms, including insomnia, anxiety and depression, in addition to some pain disorders."⁴

The US Army's Walter Reed Medical Center conducted a similar study. A government website states, "Untreated PTSD leads to decreased force readiness and increased health care utilization." Col. Charles C. Engel, principal investigator, said "Acupuncture, which has few known side effects, holds promise as an effective treatment option for PTSD. Acupuncture has been shown to improve well-being and has been successfully used to treat stress, anxiety and pain conditions."⁵

With regular acupuncture treatment, Robert consistently sleeps through the night, wakes refreshed, feels more relaxed, is able to return to work, and enjoys his home life. Acupuncture is not a single-treatment quick fix, nor is it a band-aid, however, it is a safe, natural way to provide deep relaxation and genuine healing.

*Composite patient

1. www.cbc.ca/news/background/health/posttraumaticstress.html
2. <http://www.woundedtimes.blogspot.com/2008/02/canada-veterans-with-ptsd-tripled-since.html>
3. <http://clinicaltrials.gov>
4. www.acupuncturetoday.com/mpacms/at/article.php?id=28355
5. www.acudetox.com/news/?p=23

For more information:

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/healthinformation/ptsdmenu.cfm>

www.vac-acc.gc.ca/clients/sub.cfm?source=mhealth/ptsd_families

<http://tmt.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/2/1/7>

<http://www.acupuncturetoday.com/mpacms/at/article.php?id=28355>

<http://www.vfw.org/index.cfm?fa=news.magDtl&dtl=3&mid=3832>

http://www.moaa.org/momStory.aspx?pagename=pubs_mom_070601_ptsd

http://archives.cbc.ca/war_conflict/veterans/topics/1039-5846/

http://archives.cbc.ca/war_conflict/peacekeeping/topics/1686-11622/

www.clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/results?term=PTSD+acupuncture

The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, June 2007 Michael Hollifield, Nityamo Sinclair-Lian, Teddy D. Warner, and [Richard Hammerschlag](#), "Acupuncture for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: A Randomized Controlled Pilot Trial."

Jennifer G. Strong, R.Ac. (Dr.TCM-Alberta), M.Ac.&O.M., Diplomate Acupuncture (NCCAOM), has been in private practice since 1996 and may be reached at 250-339-3394 or www.GuthrieAcupunctureClinic.com