



VA's Office of Research & Development supports a strong program of research directed to understanding, treating, and preventing Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which is an unrelenting biological reaction to the experience of a traumatic event. In the case of veterans, the trauma may occur from combat duty or other experiences where one's safety or life is threatened. VA scientists have long been leaders in making new advances for treating and understanding PTSD.

Examples of VA research advances

- **Drug already used by millions may be effective in the treatment of PTSD**—In an exciting new treatment development, VA researchers found that prazosin, an inexpensive generic drug already used by millions of Americans for high blood pressure and prostate problems, improved sleep and reduced trauma nightmares in a small number of veterans with PTSD. Plans are underway for a large, multi-site trial to confirm the drug's effectiveness.
- **Effects of a traumatic memory may be eliminated or reduced when medication is administered as the memory is replayed under controlled circumstances**—A study is being conducted to determine if the drug propranolol is effective at reducing PTSD symptoms such as hyper-arousal, re-experiencing, or avoidance when a distressing memory is reactivated.
- **First ever clinical trial for the treatment of military service-related chronic PTSD**—The largest study of its kind, involving 400 veterans from 20 VA medical centers nationwide, is being conducted to determine if risperidone, a medication already shown to be safe and effective in the treatment of PTSD, is also effective in veterans with chronic PTSD who continue to have symptoms despite receiving standard medications used for this disorder.

Facts About PTSD

PTSD is a psychiatric disorder that can affect people who have experienced life-threatening events, such as combat, a terrorist attack, or a personal assault. Symptoms include flashbacks, nightmares, depression, and social withdrawal, as well as physical health changes. Treatment often includes anti-anxiety drugs or other medication, as well as exposure therapy, a form of cognitive-behavioral therapy in which patients recall their traumas in a safe setting and gradually learn to adjust their emotional response. VA Research has long been leaders in making new advances for treating and understanding PTSD.

