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Bright Light Therapy Improves Sleep Disturbances in Soldiers with Combat PTSD

Bright light therapy has significant effects on sleep disturbances associated with combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), according to a research abstract presented at [SLEEP 2010](#).

The study involved 16 soldiers who returned to the United States with combat-related PTSD after serving in Iraq. Following a 1-week baseline, participants were randomized to one of two 4-week treatments. Eight soldiers received 10,000 lux of bright light therapy for 30 minutes each day. The other eight participants were assigned to the placebo group and received sham treatment with an inactivated negative ion generator. The Clinician-Administered PTSD Scale (CAPS-2) was completed at baseline and immediately following completion of the study. At weekly intervals, depression was assessed with the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II), and sleep quality was assessed with the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) with addendum for PTSD (PSQI-PTSD).

Results indicate that bright light therapy produced a significantly greater improvement than placebo in sleep disturbances specific to PTSD. Bright light therapy also produced a moderate improvement in PTSD symptoms and depression.

"Results of this ongoing study show significant effects of bright light on disruptive nocturnal behaviors associated with combat PTSD, as well as positive effects of bright light therapy on PTSD symptom severity," said study coordinator Shannon Cornelius, PhD, graduate research assistant for Dr Shawn D. Youngstedt in the department of exercise science at the University of South Carolina, Columbia. "Because bright light therapy is a relatively simple, self-administered, inexpensive treatment with few side effects, these results are an important step to further establish the efficacy of bright light therapy as an alternative or adjunct treatment for combat-related PTSD."



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