



Using EMA to Assess the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder-HIV Risk Behavior Relationship in OEF/OIF Veterans

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What is the research about?

The purpose of this study is to understand what events immediately and more remotely predict the occurrence of high-risk sexual behaviors (HRSB) in male post-9/11-era Veterans. Based on previous research, the study will test whether post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms, negative affect, alcohol and substance use increase within the hours preceding a high-risk sexual event.

Why is this important for HIV prevention and treatment?

Recent studies have indicated that rates of HIV and sexually transmitted infections are elevated among Veterans. HRSB has been associated with PTSD in military personnel, but the nature of the association is not

well understood. Clarifying the timing of events between PTSD symptom elevation, substance use, and condomless sex will provide essential information to design interventions to reduce HRSB.

What did the researchers do?

This is an observational study designed to sample behavior at random times in the contexts of Veterans' everyday lives over a 28-day period. Three times per day, Veterans received a text containing a brief questionnaire about their symptoms, mood, substance use in the past 2 hours, and recent sexual behavior. Analyses explored rates and contexts of risk behavior.

What did the researchers find?

Preliminary analyses have shown that specific PTSD symptoms,

such as negative affect and hyperarousal, and not others, were elevated in the periods preceding high-risk sexual behavior and, separately, alcohol use.

How can you use this research?

Clinicians who work with Veterans with PTSD can use this research to understand how PTSD symptoms and mood fluctuate over time, and how these fluctuations are associated with substance use and sexual behavior. The information can help to design more precise interventions that can target circumstances that initiate risk-taking.

Original Research Article:

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