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Introduction

The proposed study seeks to address the problems that some veterans and service personnel have when trying to access appropriate health care for PTSD. One way to improve access to this care is to deliver the treatment over a video conferencing system (referred to as telemental health or TMH) so that personnel in geographically underserved areas can be treated by clinicians with specialized training. Specifically we will be comparing the efficacy of Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) when provided in traditional face-to-face (FTF) vs. via TMH. The study will compare these modalities of treatment among OEF/OIF veterans who have developed PTSD secondary to their military trauma. The treatment will directly help the veterans by providing education and skills-building to help them process their reactions to their traumas and decrease the experience of PTSD symptoms. This study has a unique component of having an accompanying website which allows the veterans in the TMH condition to complete their therapy assignments in a secure online environment.

Body

The study is well underway and currently we have randomized 36 veterans – 8 to the TMH condition and 8 to the FTF condition. Five people are currently active in treatment. Of these 24 were randomized from Hines VA and 12 from the Madison VA. At Hines 121 patients have been screened and at Madison 35 have been screened. We are meeting with a variety of clinical teams at the Madison VA to increase enrollment. There have been no complaints about the study by Veterans.

An on-going issue has been finding OEF/OIF vets who have the time to commit to coming to the study visits since after the baseline assessment; they need to come twice a week for 6 weeks. Veterans have stated that paying for gasoline has been an issue so given the surplus in our remaining budget we are going to increase the subject payments in order to assist with travel costs. Since many of these Veterans have young families, work and go to school; coming in twice a week has been difficult. We have been meeting with teams in a variety of clinics across the VA to improve our recruitment and retention.

Key Research Accomplishments

Trial is ongoing so we do not have accomplishments to report other than we continue to make progress as outlined on our Statement of Work.

Reportable Outcomes

There are no reportable outcomes at this time.

Conclusion

The study is well underway and we have made decent progress in terms of enrolling participants. This continues to be a challenge and is consistent with what other study teams who are treating PTSD with OEF/OIF are reporting (e.g., Gros, Yoder, Tuerk, Lozano, & Acierno, 2011). Recruitment remains a critical focus for both study teams. Given we have 15 more months we are hopeful that we will reach our recruitment goals.

References

Gros, D.F., Yoder, M., Tuerk, P. W., Lozano, B. E. & Acierno, R. (2011). Exposure Therapy for PTSD Delivered to Veterans via Telehealth: Predictors of Treatment Completion and Outcome and Comparison to Treatment Delivered in Person. *Behavior Therapy, 42*, 276–283.

Appendices

None