

Our research

Our internationally acclaimed research program contributes to the University of Melbourne's reputation for world class research. Our research provides a base for our policy advice, service development and education activities. We also provide consultancy services in evaluation and outcome monitoring. Features of our current research program include:

The Traumatic Injury Research program

This research has the potential to benefit the more than 300,000 Australians admitted to hospital each with serious injuries as a result of an accident or assault.

Advancements in medical science mean that more and more people survive such injuries. Our research team is exploring exactly *how well* they survive. Most people with serious injuries are currently offered little in the way of targeted mental health care during their stay in hospital or following discharge. Through its findings and studies, the Traumatic Injury Research program is pioneering better mental health care for people with serious injuries. Over the past seven years, the research team has:

- Found that the frequency with which injury occurs makes it one of the leading causes of trauma related mental health problems in Australia. In large epidemiological studies, up to 10 per cent of people with traumatic injury developed PTSD, 16 per cent developed depression and 11 per cent developed generalised anxiety disorder. The majority of those who developed these mental health problems did not have the problem when they were injured.
- Developed the Posttrauma Adjustment Screen (PAS), a world-first short screening index that accurately identifies patients at risk for high posttraumatic stress and depression symptoms at 12 months following injury.
- Found that a person's levels of anxiety and depression in hospital were a far better predictor of their quality of life and disability in 12-months than were aspects of the injury itself. This suggests that the management of a person's psychological health while in hospital should be a necessary part of trauma care services.

The team is currently working on the Promoting Recover Study, testing a stepped approach to psychological assessment and treatment to prevent posttraumatic mental health problems in seriously injured people.

Cognitive processing therapy trial (CPT trial)

This trial aims to test the effectiveness of CPT in a naturalistic clinical setting. The findings will help to establish if CPT is a valid alternative to imaginal exposure therapy, itself the most validated treatment for treating posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The trial began in July 2007 with counsellors and the veteran clients in three locations of VVCS - Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service.

Since its development in the USA 14 years ago, CPT's effectiveness has been proven through a number of randomised controlled trials (RCTS) but it has never been tested in a naturalistic setting. This is a real world trial, with practitioners from an existing community clinical service (VVCS), treating clients with PTSD who, of their own volition, seek help at the service. The trial involves 18 participating therapists, with nine delivering CPT and nine delivering treatment as usual. A two-day CPT training workshop and weekly expert CPT consultation are provided for the nine therapists providing the CPT treatment. Sixty veterans will be involved, with half receiving 12 twice - weekly CPT sessions and half receiving treatment as usual, which can vary depending on the veteran's needs. The Department of Veterans' Affairs is funding the trial and it is expected to be complete at the end of 2009.

For more information:

www.acpmh.unimelb.edu.au/services/research-community.html

[Traumatic Injury Research program's publications and articles](#)

[Alternative to exposure therapy: a real world trial, TraumaNews October 2007](#)