

NEWS RELEASE 18-MAR-2021

# Transcendental Meditation effective in reducing PTSD, sleep problems, depression symptoms

MAHARISHI INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Research News



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Veterans with PTSD who practiced the Transcendental Meditation technique showed significant reductions in PTSD symptom severity, according to a new study published today in *Journal of Traumatic Stress*. Fifty percent of the meditating veterans no longer met criteria for PTSD after three months compared to only 10 percent of controls. The randomized controlled study also showed significant reductions in veterans' symptoms of depression and anxiety, and sleep difficulties.

"Transcendental Meditation is a non-trauma-focused, easy-to-learn technique that was found in this study to improve PTSD symptoms, likely through the experience of physical rest," said Mayer Bellehse, Ph.D., director of the [Unified Behavioral Health Center for Military Veterans and their Families, Northwell Health](#), and study principal investigator. "In contrast to commonly administered therapies for PTSD that are trauma-focused and based on a patient's recall of past traumatic experiences, this intervention does not require extensive review of traumatic history, which some individuals find difficult to engage in. This intervention may therefore be more tolerable for some individuals struggling with PTSD."

The randomized controlled trial, conducted at Northwell Health in Bay Shore, New York, assigned 40 veterans with documented PTSD to either the Transcendental Meditation (TM) group or treatment as usual control group. The TM treatment provided 16 sessions over 12 weeks, with twice-a-day daily home practice. PTSD symptom severity was assessed with the Clinician-Administered PTSD Scale for DSM-5 (CAPS-5), and patient self-report with the PTSD Checklist for DSM-5 (PCL-5).

The results showed large effect sizes, indicating a strong TM treatment impact in reducing trauma symptoms for both PTSD measures. Other factors associated with trauma, such as depression and anxiety symptoms and sleep problems, also showed a strong impact of TM treatment.

"This trial corroborates the findings of a large clinical trial published in *The Lancet Psychiatry*," said Sanford Nidich, Ed.D., Director of the [Center for Social-Emotional Health at Maharishi International University Research Institute](#), and study co-investigator. "The current study further supports the effectiveness of Transcendental Meditation as a first-line treatment for PTSD in veterans. The availability of an additional evidence-based therapy will benefit veterans, both by offering them a greater range of options and by serving as an alternative treatment strategy for those who don't want to engage in trauma-focused treatment or who aren't responding to a previous PTSD intervention."

The authors point out in their research paper that TM may positively affect trauma symptom severity through the reduction of hyperarousal symptoms. Previous research has shown that TM practice decreases physiological responses to stressful stimuli. In addition, recent research indicates that TM may improve resilience and positive coping strategies, providing further benefit to both veterans and active military personnel.

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This study was supported by [David Lynch Foundation](#). The article is titled, "[A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial of Transcendental Meditation as Treatment for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Veterans](#)." Northwell Health, New York University, and Maharishi International University Research Institute collaborated on the trial. Preliminary results had been previously presented at the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies conference, November 2017 in Chicago, Illinois.

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## Media Contact

Ken Chawkin  
[kchawkin@miu.edu](mailto:kchawkin@miu.edu)

[@maharishiuni](https://twitter.com/maharishiuni)

<https://www.miu.edu/>

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JOURNAL *Journal of Traumatic Stress*

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## KEYWORDS

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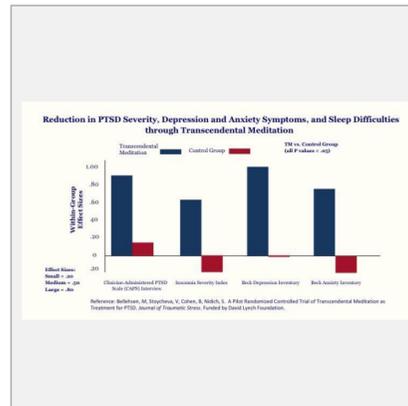
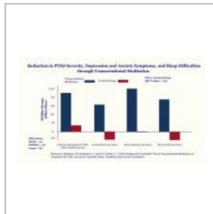


IMAGE: FIFTY PERCENT OF VETERANS WHO PRACTICED THE TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION TECHNIQUE FOR THREE MONTHS NO LONGER MET CRITERIA FOR PTSD COMPARED TO ONLY 10 PERCENT OF CONTROLS. MEDITATING VETERANS ALSO SHOWED... [view more >](#)

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## MULTIMEDIA



Reduction in PTSD Severity, Depression and Anxiety Symptoms, and Sleep Difficulties through Transcendental Meditation (IMAGE)

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