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PRELIMINARY RESULTS INDICATE A COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL HEALTHY LIFESTYLE INTERVENTION FOR PTSD IMPROVES SLEEP AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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Preliminary Results Indicate a Cognitive Behavioral Healthy Lifestyle Intervention for PTSD Improves Sleep and Physical Activity

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Individuals with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are at risk for poorer health. Cardiovascular risk is of particular concern, given a strong relationship between PTSD and heart disease. Studies are needed to examine the benefits of addressing health problems/behaviors as adjunctive treatments in adults with PTSD. The purpose of this study was to examine preliminary pilot data on the effects of a cognitive behavioral healthy lifestyle intervention among adults with PTSD. The intervention involved 12 weekly sessions, and focused on physical activity, sleep, and stress management.

Participants were randomized to the healthy lifestyle intervention condition or a wait-list control condition. A total of 22 women completed the protocol (11 per group). The mean age was 32 ($SD \pm 14$). Evaluations conducted before and after the 12-week intervention in the experimental group, and 12 weeks apart for the control group, included standardized self-report measures of physical activity (Paffenbarger scale), sleep (Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index), and general stress (Weekly Stress Inventory).

The intervention group showed an increase in sleep amount pre to post (mean of 1.2 hours per night), which was significantly different than the control participants who had no change ($p < .05$; large effect = 1.41). The intervention group evidenced notable increases in physical activity pre to post (mean = 115.8 minutes over 7 days) relative to controls (mean = 4.5 minutes over 7 days); however, this large effect (0.70) was not significant in the small study sample. Stress ratings improved in the intervention group; although stress was essentially unchanged for controls, this effect was also not significant.

The findings suggest that a healthy lifestyle intervention can improve sleep in PTSD. Effect sizes for improvements in physical activity and stress suggest these may be additional areas to evaluate with larger samples.