EMDR RESEARCH FOUNDATION

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EMDR and The Military In Action

A monthly newsletter to keep you informed.

This is a monthly e-newsletter created primarily for our colleagues trained in Eye Movement Desensitization and Desensitization (EMDR) who work with military, veterans, and their families. The purpose of **EMDR and The Military In Action**is to promote continued dialogue regarding the efficacy and current developments with EMDR and its use with these special populations.

In This Issue

Citation of the Month

- Is Bilateral Stimulation Important?

Lee, C. W., & Cuijpers, P. (2013). **A meta-analysis of the contribution of eye movements in processing emotional memories.**
Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry, 44(2), 231-239. doi:10.1016/j.jbtep.2012.11.001.

Background and objectives: Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) is now considered evidence based practice in the treatment of trauma symptoms. Yet in a previous meta-analysis, no significant effect was found for the eye movement component. However methodological issues with this study may have resulted in a type II error. The aim of this meta-analysis was to

examine current published studies to test whether eye movements significantly affect the processing of distressing memories. Method: A systematic review of the literature revealed two groups of studies. The first group comprised 15 clinical trials and compared the effects of EMDR therapy with eye movements to those of EMDR without the eye movements. The second group comprised 11 laboratory trials that investigated the effects of eye movements while thinking of a distressing memory versus the same procedure without the eye movements in a non-therapy context. The total number of participants was 849. Results: The effect size for the additive effect of eye movements in EMDR treatment studies was moderate and significant (Cohens d = .41). For the second group of laboratory studies the effect size was large and significant (d = .74). The strongest effect size difference was for vividness measures in the non-therapy studies (d =.91). The data indicated that treatment fidelity acted as a moderator variable on the effect of eye movements in the therapy studies.
Conclusions: Results were discussed in terms of current theories that suggest the processes involved in EMDR are different from other exposure based therapies.

Nieuwenhuis, S., Elzinga, B. M., Ras, P. H., Berends, F., Duijs, P., Samara, Z., & Slagter, H. A. (2012). **Bilateral saccadic eye movements and tactile stimulation, but not auditory stimulation, enhance memory retrieval.** Brain and Cognition, 81(1), 52-56. doi:10.1016/j.bandc.2012.10.003.

Recent research has shown superior memory retrieval when participants make a series of horizontal saccadic eye movements between the memory encoding phase and the retrieval phase compared to participants who do not move their eyes or move their eyes vertically. It has been hypothesized that the rapidly alternating activation of the two hemispheres that is associated with the series of left-right eye movements is critical in causing the enhanced retrieval. This hypothesis predicts a beneficial effect on retrieval of alternating left-right stimulation not only of the visuomotor system, but also of the somatosensory system, both of which have a strict contralateral organization. In contrast, this hypothesis does not predict an effect, or a weaker effect, on retrieval of alternating left-right stimulation of the auditory system, which has a much less lateralized organization. Consistent with these predictions, we replicated the horizontal saccade-induced retrieval enhancement (Experiment 1) and showed that a similar retrieval enhancement occurs after alternating left-right tactile stimulation (Experiment 2). Furthermore, retrieval was not enhanced after alternating left-right auditory stimulation compared to simultaneous bilateral auditory stimulation (Experiment 3). We discuss the possibility that alternating bilateral activation of the left and right hemispheres exerts its effects on memory by increasing the functional connectivity between the two hemispheres. We also discuss the findings in the context of clinical practice, in which bilateral eye movements (EMDR) and auditory stimulation are used in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder.

From The EMDR Book Shelf

Silver, S. M., & Rogers, S. (2002). **Light in the heart of darkness:EMDR and the treatment of war and terrorism survivors** (1st ed.). New York: Norton. xix, 272 pp.

Notes that the effects of war and terrorism can be long-lasting and discreet, emerging years later in different forms of psychological and physical strain in the body. In this work, the authors uncover how developments in Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) can be successfully applied to the treatment of war and terrorism trauma. They address issues confronted by all clinicians attempting to respond to this particular type of trauma--the psychological aftermath of man's inhumanity to man. The authors focus on the application of EMDR to clients' traumatic experiences, covering a wide range of traumatic settings and survivors from school violence to "near-war" experiences, refugees, combat soldiers, children, and emergency service workers. They provide a review of the research on the use of EMDR, specific case studies to demonstrate their results as well as general suggestions for integrating EMDR into the therapeutic process. It is stated that this book can be used as a general reference for all practitioners looking to broaden their understanding and care of trauma patients. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2008 APA, all rights reserved).

EMDR In The News

Jayatunge, R. M. (2011). **War trauma in the military, their families and communities**. Lankaweb.

Lance Corporal S was diagnosed with PTSD treated with SSRI and EMDR. After intense therapy, his anxiety based symptoms were reduced to a significant level.

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2920 N. Quinlan Park Road, Suite B240 #115, Austin, TX 78732
512-571-3637 www.emdrresearchfoundation.org

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