

VETERANS UPDATE

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 7 AUGUST, 2016

ZIKA: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



You've probably heard about Zika. VA staff are ready to test, treat and prevent Zika infection. Here's what you should know:

- Zika spreads primarily through mosquito bites, and also through sex with an infected person.
- The best way to prevent Zika is to prevent mosquito bites. Use insect repellent, wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants, stay in places with window and

door screens, and remove standing water around your home.

- Zika is linked to birth defects. If your partner lives in or has traveled to an area with Zika, do not have sex or use condoms every time during your pregnancy.
- Pregnant women should not travel to areas with Zika. If you must travel to one of these areas, talk to your doctor about precautions.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sept. 14, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Mental Health Summit
5th Floor Auditorium. A discussion on how to meet Veterans' mental health needs.

Sept. 26, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.
"Soldier On" Movie Screening
5th Floor Auditorium. A movie and panel discussion about returning women Veterans.

Nov. 18, 2 - 3:30 p.m.
VBA & VAMC Joint Veteran Town Hall Meeting
5th Floor Auditorium. Join leadership for an update and ask questions.

- Returning travelers infected with Zika can spread the virus through mosquito bites or sex. To learn more about Zika, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/zika/>.

MILLION VETERAN PROGRAM REACHES 500,000

With more than 500,000 Veterans enrolled, the Million Veteran Program is now the largest genomic database in the world.

MVP links genetic, clinical, lifestyle and military-exposure information, and will help researchers learn about the role genes play in a variety of diseases relevant to Veterans and the population at large, leading to better treatment and prevention strategies.

For more on MVP, visit <http://www.research.va.gov/mvp>.

Because they deserve a better tomorrow...

Walk-ins Welcome!

MVP Million Veteran Program

Visit us at www.research.va.gov/mvp
Or call 866-441-6075

VA U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Office of Research and Development

COMBINING TECHNOLOGIES TO TREAT PTSD



Dr. Mascha Frank, a researcher at the Providence VA Medical Center, and Dr. Noah Philip, a Providence VAMC psychiatrist, demonstrate the transcranial direct current stimulation and virtual reality equipment used in the Transcranial Direct Current Stimulation-Augmentation of Virtual Reality Exposure for PTSD, or TAVRE, study Nov. 19, 2015. (Providence VA Medical Center photo by Causey Dunlap.)

Researchers at the Providence VA Medical Center, led by Dr. Mascha Frank, are conducting a study to find out if the use of a low electrical current on the scalp makes it easier to watch deployment scenes from Iraq and Afghanistan using virtual reality in Veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder, commonly referred to as PTSD.

The ultimate goal of the Transcranial Direct Current Stimulation-Augmentation of Virtual Reality Exposure for PTSD, or TAVRE, study is to find out if low electrical current stimulation can improve and shorten treatment for PTSD.

“The study is a direct follow-up from our prior work on testing the effects of transcranial direct current stimulation during the generation of safety memories after fear conditioning,” said Frank. “Our main findings from that study were that tDCS promoted the generation and re-

vention of safety memories.”

Safety memories can help an individual reduce anxiety and exert greater control over their thoughts.

“Fear conditioning has been used as a model for PTSD, so our next step was to test the effects of non-invasive brain stimulation during the presentation of warzone scenes using virtual reality more appropriate to PTSD, which is what we’re doing with the TAVRE study,” Frank said.

Transcranial direct current stimulation, known as tDCS, delivers a low current to the brain via electrodes on the scalp. The TAVRE study pairs this technology with virtual reality equipment to simulate combat activities, such as driving a military vehicle through a hostile area.

“This study is an excellent example of the cutting-edge research we’re doing that may benefit not only Veterans, but the general population, as well,” said Dr. Rob-



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401-457-3336

Veteran’s Crisis Line:
800-273-8255 press 1

Website:

www.providence.va.gov

Facebook:

[facebook.com/
VAProvidence](https://facebook.com/VAProvidence)

ert Swift, chief of Mental Health at the Providence VAMC. “While PTSD is more common among the Veteran population, it can occur in anyone who has experienced a traumatic event.”

A total of 20 Veterans will participate in the TAVRE study, which started in January 2016. It is a pilot study that will look for evidence of an effect as a result of the technique, before moving on to a larger study that focuses more on clinical treatment.

For more information about the study, please contact Causey Dunlap at 401-273-7100 ext. 6221.