Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):
Veteran PTSD Checklist-Civilian Version (PCL-C) Pre- and Post-Treatment Differences Based on Military Era and Age

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Background Information

Togus Veterans Affairs Medical Center
- One of the nation's 153 Veterans Affairs Medical Centers that serve 5.5 million veterans every year.
- A 67-operating bed facility with general medical, surgical, intermediate, and mental health beds.
- Opened in the fall of 1866 and is the oldest veterans' facility in the country.
- The VHA is the nation's largest integrated health care system.
- Eligibility for care:
  - A person who served in the active military, naval, or air service and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable may qualify for VA health care benefits.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- DSM-IV-TR (2000) criteria for PTSD:
  - The trauma must involve actual or threatened death or serious injury to the individual, or someone else known to the individual.
  - The individual must elicit a response involving fear, helplessness, or horror.
  - The individual must display the following behaviors in regard to the trauma or stimuli associated with the trauma:
    - Persistent reexperiencing
    - Persistent avoidance
    - Symptoms of increased arousal
- The lifetime prevalence of PTSD among adult Americans is estimated to be 6.8%.
- Estimations of PTSD prevalence among veterans:
  - Vietnam: 30.9% lifetime prevalence for males
  - Gulf War: 10.1%
  - OEF/OIF: 13.8%

My Research

Background
- Little research has been conducted to investigate the efficacy of ACT for those suffering from PTSD.
- At this time, the only support for ACT as a treatment of PTSD comes from case studies.
- However, ACT has been demonstrated to be an effective treatment for other anxiety disorders including: Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD), Panic Disorder and Social Phobia.
- ACT has also been shown to be a successful intervention for patients with combinations of depressive disorder, anxiety disorders, and adjustment disorders.
- The VHA endorses ACT as an evidence-based treatment for mood disorders.
- Objectives of the current study:
  - To add to the small body of research on the impact of ACT as a treatment for PTSD in combat veterans.
  - To assess pre- and post-treatment changes on the PTSD Checklist-Civilian Version (PCL-C) depending on military era or age.

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Preliminary Results
- Participants
  - N = 180
  - N = 180
  - Military Era
    - Vietnam: N = 75
    - Gulf War: N = 11
    - OEF/OIF: N = 47
  - Mean Age = 54 years
- Assessment
  - The Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Checklist-Civilian Version (PCL-C) includes seventeen Likert scale items and is administered in order to evaluate symptoms of PTSD.
- Procedure
  - A retrospective chart review study based on archival data collected on veterans with PTSD who attended an ACT Intensive Outpatient Program.
- Preliminary results:
  - There was a significant change in PCL-C scores from pre-treatment to post-treatment, t(179) = 9.67, p < .0001, with an mean decrease of 7.3 points.
  - There was no difference in the change in PCL-C score from pre-treatment to post-treatment depending on military era while controlling for age F(2, 132) = 2.12, p > .05 or veteran age r(178) = .058, p > .05.
- These preliminary results indicate that the Togus ACT IOP is effective in reducing the symptoms of PTSD as measured by the PCL-C. However, a limitation of the study is the absence of a randomized control group.