



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration  
Boston Healthcare System

# News Release

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Study finds written exposure therapy effective option for treating PTSD**

BOSTON – A VA-funded research study published today in JAMA Psychiatry suggests written exposure therapy can be both an efficient and effective option for treating posttraumatic stress disorder, commonly known as PTSD.

“Participants suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder improved significantly using both prolonged exposure and written exposure therapies,” said Dr. Denise M. Sloan, associate director for the Behavioral Science Division of the National Center for PTSD, located at VA Boston Healthcare System, and professor of psychiatry at Boston University Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine, lead author of the study. “Participants who received written exposure therapy were more likely to complete treatment, however, and it required fewer treatment sessions versus prolonged exposure therapy.”

Prolonged exposure, or PE, therapy involves 8-15 individual sessions, lasting 90 minutes each, and include between-session assignments. Written exposure therapy, or WET, consists of five sessions for 60 minutes each, during which patients write about a specific traumatic event, with no between-session assignments.

The study, available at <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/article-abstract/2808302>, consisted of a randomized, noninferiority controlled trial conducted between Sept. 9, 2019, and April 30, 2022. Participants were 178 Veterans with PTSD who sought treatment at one of three VA medical centers. Independent evaluations were conducted at baseline and 10, 20 and 30 weeks after the first treatment session. Participants received either PE therapy or WET during weekly sessions.

“While further research is needed, these results suggest that written exposure therapy can be both an effective and efficient option for treating posttraumatic stress disorder, which may help us provide care to more individuals in need of PTSD treatment,” Sloan concluded.

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## **WET effective for treating PTSD – 2 of 2**



**Dr. Denise M. Sloan, VA Boston psychologist, associate director for the Behavioral Science Division of the National Center for PTSD, and a professor of psychiatry at Boston University Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine. (Photo courtesy of Dr. Sloan)**

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