

## Study May Prove PTSD is a Medical, Not Psychological, Condition

Written by Ginny Grimsley

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A Chicago physician is recruiting veterans with PTSD for a study of a medical treatment that erases symptoms in 30 minutes.

With \$82,000 in funding from the state of Illinois, Dr. Eugene Lipov ([www.ChicagoMedicalInnovations.org](http://www.ChicagoMedicalInnovations.org)), author of Exit Strategy for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, plans to treat 10 patients and follow up with biological marker tests that would help prove his theory that PTSD is a medical, not a psychological, condition. He's seeking corporate donations to broaden the study in order to hasten the Veterans Administration's acceptance of the procedure, which has been used to treat 95 patients.

"The Veterans Administration's treatment for PTSD involves intensive psychological therapy and psychotropic drugs that works only about half the time and can take months or years," Lipov says. "My treatment, stellate ganglion block (SGB), involves two injections and works very quickly. In 80 to 85 percent of patients, it completely erases symptoms."

Lipov has treated 50 patients with SGB, an injection of anesthesia into a cluster of nerves in the neck. His success stories date back to his first patient, who remains symptom-free after three years. Another 45 or so veterans have undergone the treatment at four military institutions, including a small study still underway at the Naval Medical Center San Diego.

He theorizes that SGB works because it reduces excessive levels of cortisol, nerve growth factor and norepinephrine in the brain, all stimulated as an organic response to stress.

"This study will be the first that includes checking for post-treatment biomarkers," Lipov says. "If I can show there's a biological change, that the treatment's success isn't just a placebo effect, I can get more acceptance. Right now, part of the problem is credulity – people can't believe there's such a simple solution to a complex problem."

Treating PTSD with SGB is a new application for a procedure that's been safely used to treat

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other conditions since 1925. Lipov has FDA approval for its use for PTSD and recently it was approved for experimental studies by the Institutional Review Board.

But despite congressional support, he has been unable to secure federal funding for a large study that would hasten the treatment's acceptance by the Veterans Administration. So he's seeking private and corporate donors to match Illinois' contribution to his non-profit, Chicago Medical Innovations, so he can expand the biomarker study. People who buy his book *Exit Strategy*, about the latest PTSD developments, also help fund veterans' treatments; Lipov donates \$5 from each book sale toward the two \$1,000 injections.

"The more money I raise, the more patients I can treat, and the more veterans who get better, the more I can publish the results," Lipov said. "Basically, the more impressive the numbers, the more lives are saved."

An estimated 300,000 veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan suffered post-traumatic stress disorder or major depression, according to a Rand Corp. report. The debilitating condition is characterized by outbursts of rage, terrifying flashbacks, nightmares, anxiety and other issues that lead to substance abuse, violent crimes, joblessness and homelessness.

### About Dr. Eugene Lipov

Dr. Lipov graduated from Feinberg School of Medicine at Northwestern University and completed two-year residencies in surgery and anesthesiology before receiving advanced training in pain management at Rush University Medical Center, where he worked as an assistant professor of pain management. Today he is the medical director of Advanced Pain Centers in Hoffman Estates, Ill. He has published research articles in several medical journals.