

Embodied warrior wellness: Dance/movement therapy-based mind-body medicine in an integrative medicine treatment program for military members with traumatic brain injury

Dance/movement therapy (DMT) has potential as a valuable component of integrative recovery treatment plans for veteran and military populations. The research questions explored in this study were: (a) What is the military member's experience of DMT-based mind-body medicine in an integrative healthcare (IM) setting? (b) What is the IM staff's perspective on integrative medicine? and (c) Does this program demonstrate IM foundational tenets (Bravewell Collaborative, 2010)?

This holistic case study analyzed an IM program for military service members with traumatic brain injury (TBI) and mental health conditions. Multiple sources including field observations, self-report surveys, public archival data, and embodied data, provided quantitative and qualitative information from three perspectives: the program as executed, as experienced by patients (n=484), and as interpreted by a researcher-practitioner. ~~provided quantitative and qualitative data from three perspectives: the program as executed, as experienced by patients (n=484), and as interpreted by a researcher-practitioner.~~ Thematic analysis of the qualitative data and descriptive statistics were complemented by an innovative embodied art-based analysis (Lindsay, 2019). Established elements of IM (Bravewell Collaborative, 2010) and Laban Movement Analysis served as analytic frameworks.

The findings revealed varying levels of inclusion of the IM elements according to the type of activity (clinical, administrative, research) with a focus on evidence-based care. Likert responses (on a 1 to 10 scale) revealed mean increases of 1.84 for patient mind-body awareness and 2.12 for confidence with mind-body practices. Patient data exhibited patterns of emotional

struggle, increased self-awareness, transition, and shifts during treatment. Findings from the self-collected provider data mirrored the patient responses.

Results imply the importance of supportive leadership, interoceptive awareness, and collective understanding in successful operation of an IM program. These findings point to an opportunity for education and skill building among staff. Introduction of mind-body skills early in the military career could support resilience, sustain readiness, and mitigate future illness. Practitioner professional standardization would support a stronger network to meet military and veteran needs. Future research should include a larger sample of IM staff to better illuminate the provider experience.

Allison F. Winters Fisher, PhD, BC-DMT, E-RYT

afwintersfisher@outlook.com

Allison holds a PhD in mind-body medicine, an MA in psychology, and an MS in dance/movement therapy. Her past publication has received awards for research and journalism. She coordinates a mind/body wellness program at an integrative treatment program for military service members with traumatic brain injury and psychological health conditions.

Revised 9/7/2020

Revisions required:

- Your abstract required a clearly articulated research methodology that includes information on how data was collected and analyzed. Please make sure to add this information to your abstract and poster.
- Presentation of findings in relation to the research question(s), please make sure to:
- Use APA style for reporting results.
- Clarify which data comes from which analysis and what exact analysis (test) were used to analyze the quantitative data.

~~Dance/movement therapy (DMT) has potential as a valuable component of integrative recovery treatment plans for veteran and military populations. The research questions explored in this study were: (a) What is the military member's experience of DMT-based mind-body~~

medicine in an integrative healthcare (IM) setting? (b) What is the IM staff's perspective on integrative medicine? and (c) Does this program demonstrate IM foundational tenets (Bravewell Collaborative, 2010)?

This holistic case study analyzed an IM program for military service members with traumatic brain injury (TBI) and mental health conditions. Multiple sources, including field observations, self-report surveys, public archival data, and embodied data, provided quantitative and qualitative information from three perspectives: the program as executed, as experienced by patients (n=484), and as interpreted by a researcher-practitioner. Thematic analysis of the qualitative data and descriptive statistics were complemented by an innovative embodied-art-based analysis (Lindsay, 2019). Established elements of IM (Bravewell Collaborative, 2010) and Laban Movement Analysis served as analytic frameworks.

The findings revealed varying levels of inclusion of the IM elements according to the type of activity (clinical, administrative, research) with a focus on evidence-based care. Likert responses (on a 1 to 10 scale) revealed mean increases of 1.84 for patient mind-body awareness and 2.12 for confidence with mind-body practices. Patient data exhibited patterns of emotional struggle, increased self-awareness, transition, and shifts during treatment. Findings from the self-collected provider data mirrored the patient responses.

Results imply the importance of supportive leadership, interoceptive awareness, and collective understanding in successful operation of an IM program. These findings point to an opportunity for education and skill building among staff. Introduction of mind-body skills early in the military career could support resilience, sustain readiness, and mitigate future illness. Practitioner professional standardization would support a stronger network to meet military and

veteran needs. Future research should include a larger sample of IM staff to better illuminate the provider experience.