



NATIONAL COALITION *for* HOMELESS VETERANS

“Preliminary Evaluation of PTSD Coach, a Smartphone App for Post-Traumatic Stress Systems”

Kuhn, Eric, Carolyn Greene, Julia Hoffman, Tam Nguyen, Laura Wald, Janet Schmidt, Kelly M. Ramsey, and Josef Ruzek. / [Full Report](#)

Quick Takeaways:

- PTSD Coach is a free mobile application (for Android and iOS) which provides information on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) such as: contact information for receiving treatment, therapeutic exercises, and rewards for managing the symptoms of PTSD.
- Among surveyed users of the application a large majority felt that it helped in managing their symptoms and reducing stigma. Most would recommend the application to others.
- Further study is needed to understand if PTSD Coach reduces the severity of symptoms in the long-term.

Study:

PTSD Coach was created by the VA to provide support for veterans suffering from PTSD, but no study had been done to understand its effectiveness among the target audience. PTSD Coach was provided to 45 veterans (34 men, 11 women) in PTSD residential treatment programs. They had the option to use it on their own device, or to be loaned an iPod Touch to use the app.

After being taught how to use PTSD Coach, participants were given a list of tasks to complete over three days in order to expose them to the core features of the app. They were encouraged to use the app as much as they wanted. After this period, participants were given a survey and asked to participate in a focus group.

Findings:

Satisfaction with PTSD Coach was widespread, with 88.9% of participants stating that they were moderately or greatly satisfied. Large majorities of participants reported that the app helped them to track and manage their symptoms, and to discover new ways of dealing with those symptoms. A majority of the participants reported that PTSD Coach provided access to other treatment options and helped to reduce the stigma of seeking treatment for PTSD.

During the focus group, many participants reported that having the app available to them wherever needed was a great aid to them, and said that they would recommend the app to others. Some expressed frustration with specific features of the app, such as an inability to select a specific therapeutic exercise. No correlation was found between satisfaction and age, or satisfaction and smartphone ownership.

Conclusion:

PTSD Coach appears to be successful in its intended purpose of education and symptom management. However, researchers acknowledge that further study is needed with a larger sample group. Additional research is also needed into the long-term effects of PTSD Coach in reducing the symptoms of PTSD.

Kuhn, Eric, Carolyn Greene, Julia Hoffman, Tam Nguyen, Laura Wald, Janet Schmidt, Kelly M. Ramsey, and Josef Ruzek, (2014). Preliminary evaluation of PTSD Coach, a smartphone app for post-traumatic stress symptoms. *Military medicine*, 179(1), 12-18.