



## **NATIONAL COALITION *for* HOMELESS VETERANS**

### ***“Cognitive Symptom Management and Rehabilitation Therapy (CogSMART) for Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury: Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial”***

Twamley, Elizabeth W., Amy J. Jak, Dean C. Delis, Mark W. Bondi, and James B. Lohr. / [Full Report](#)

#### Quick Takeaways:

- Cognitive Symptom Management and Rehabilitation Therapy (CogSMART) is a 12 week therapy for dealing with and treating symptoms related to cognitive impairment (CI) arising from traumatic brain injury (TBI). It focuses on compensatory techniques, such as developing mnemonics and using reminders for tasks.
- Symptoms of CI, such as memory problems, difficulty learning, and distractibility, are associated with worse employment outcomes. About 7 percent of OEF/OIF veterans report CI symptoms arising from TBI.
- Used in conjunction with supported employment for veterans with mild to moderate TBI, CogSMART was associated with improvements in cognitive functioning and memory.

#### Study:

Over a year, researchers examined unemployed OEF/OIF veterans, aged 29-44, who suffered mild to moderate TBI within the previous six months, and who had documented CI. Veterans with substance use disorders were excluded. Participants were randomized into treatment (supported employment with CogSMART) [n=16] and control (supported employment) [n=18].

Various measurements of both cognitive functioning and severity of TBI symptoms were taken at baseline and three months (after completion of CogSMART) using standard measurement tools. Cognitive functions measured included: IQ (baseline only), prospective memory, attention and working memory, verbal learning, and executive functioning. Symptom severity used the Neurobehavioral Symptom Inventory, a self-reported instrument which measures physical, cognitive, and emotional symptoms associated with TBI. Researchers also tracked work outcomes.

#### Findings:

Researchers found that veterans using CogSMART had improved prospective memory and reduced CI symptoms in comparison to the control group. There were small improvements in other measurements such as work outcomes and quality of life, but these were not statistically significant. CogSMART participants also reported high self-satisfaction with the program.

#### Conclusion:

CogSMART, in conjunction with supported employment for veterans with mild to moderate TBI, could improve prospective memory function and lead to a reduction in TBI symptoms. Veterans using it also found the treatment helpful. Given the small sample size, further study is needed to better determine its effect on work outcomes and other measurements.

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