

Contact:

Dave Hutcheson
Samueli Institute
Phone: 703-299-4866
E-mail: dhutcheson@samueliinstitute.org

Samueli Institute to Conduct Workshop on Yoga in Military and Veteran Populations

ALEXANDRIA, Va., April 22, 2011 – Samueli Institute, a recognized leader in complementary and alternative medicine research, is organizing and conducting a special workshop and session on yoga in military and veteran populations at the 2011 Symposium on Yoga Therapy and Research (SYTAR) in Monterey, California as well as the 2011 Symposium on Yoga Research (SYR) in Lenox, Massachusetts.

The workshops will first review accomplishments to date by yoga therapists in military and veteran populations. They will then look at current health reform efforts related to prevention and wellness including the military's concept of Total Force Fitness being developed by the military. The workshops will also explore what can be done to further the work being done in military and veteran populations.

Recent data have shown that yoga-based programs may be effective for preventing and treating combat related illnesses. For example, an Integrative Restoration technique, known as "iRest," examined the feasibility of yoga as a treatment for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). iRest is a meditative technique that is based on the ancient philosophy and practice of Yoga Nidra but also includes elements of the modern psychotherapeutic standards of care for PTSD. iRest is designed to systematically reduce the physical and emotional tension that characterizes PTSD, and encourages deep relaxation through body scanning, imagery and deep breathing. Researchers found that the technique was feasible and military personnel reported an overall decrease in PTSD symptoms as indicated by qualitative data. Further, there was a decreasing trend in their PTSD Checklist scores, which fell by 10 – 20 points.

"The current wars are returning thousands of war fighters with mental and physical injuries, many with long-term symptomatic and functional consequences," said Matthew Fritts, M.P.H., Senior Program Manager at Samueli Institute. "Injury and trauma exposure can induce a constellation of symptoms that include depression, anxiety, anger, pain, drug and opioid desensitization with the potential for abuse, as well as dysfunctions with sleep, appetite, sex and energy. The extensive research that Samueli Institute has performed indicates that yoga and other mind-body techniques such as iRest, can be effective tools in managing the symptoms of PTSD."

The healing effects of iRest are hypothesized to work by allowing service members to enhance their resilience and psychological hardiness, develop self-efficacy for management of disturbing moods and memories, as well as empower individuals with a skill set that enables them to objectively respond to intense emotional experiences using conscious, option-driven choices rather than unconscious reactivity.

Unfortunately, evidence suggests that affected soldiers most at risk for chronic PTSD, and thus most in need of effective early mental health intervention, are among the least likely to seek care. The service members with the greatest distress and PTSD symptoms at the time of return from the war zone reported mistrust of mental health professionals, concerns about being stigmatized and doubts about the effectiveness of mental health treatments. Self-care practices like yoga offer an evidence-based alternative for those who refuse, delay or feel stigmatized by conventional mental health treatments.

SYTAR 2011 will take place September 1-4 at the Asilomar Conference Grounds in Monterey, California and SYR 2011 will take place September 23-25 at the Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health in Lenox, Massachusetts. The symposia are presented by the International Association of Yoga Therapists. Visit www.sytar.org for more information.

About Samueli Institute

Samueli Institute is a non-profit 501(c)(3) research organization supporting the scientific investigation of healing processes and their role in medicine and health care. Founded in 2001, the Institute is advancing the science of healing worldwide. Samueli Institute's research domains include integrative medicine, optimal healing environments, the role of the mind in healing, behavioral medicine, health care policy, and military and veterans health care. Our mission is to transform health care through the scientific exploration of healing. More information can be found at SamueliInstitute.org.