Executive Dysfunction and Self-Harm Behavior: An Examination of Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or Both

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CURRENT RESEARCH:
Mild TBI and PTSD in Executive Functioning

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This project will determine whether methods drawn from basic science can robustly detect the effects of traumatic brain injury (TBI) and/or post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) on executive functioning.

Although TBI often occurs in the context of a traumatic event, very little research has attempted to disentangle the effects of TBI from PTSD, both of which compromise executive functioning.

Of note, standard neuropsychological testing methods are ineffective in distinguishing between these groups.

The purpose of this project is to:

1) Investigate whether tasks taken from cognitive neuroscience can detect and distinguish impairments in executive function in individuals with a) mild TBI b) PTSD or c) mild TBI + PTSD;

2) Determine whether performance on these tasks is linked to outcomes suicidality; and

3) Establish whether information regarding brain anatomy can provide additional information above and beyond behavioral performance in distinguishing between these groups.

Primary Hypothesis:
Across three tasks (Go/No-Go Task, Think/No-Think Task and Iowa Gambling Test) we predict that each group will show a specific pattern of performance relative to controls.

Secondary Hypothesis:
The pattern across these three tasks will be superior in distinguishing between the groups to standard neuropsychological tests.

Findings may provide tools to help clinicians distinguish between individuals with mild TBI, PTSD, or mild TBI + PTSD.

This project has the potential for linking executive dysfunction in populations of interest to their brain bases, and to suicidal behavior.

Information obtained in this study may be useful in designing treatments for individuals with these disorders.

We are currently recruiting and enrolling participants into this research study.