

\$3.5M Grant to Fund Combo Treatment for PTSD and Alcohol Use Disorder

Clinical trial will focus on combining cognitive processing therapy and relapse prevention.

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Researchers from the University of Houston (UH) and the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) received a nearly \$3.5 million grant to study the effectiveness of treating [alcohol use disorder \(AUD\)](#) and [posttraumatic stress disorder \(PTSD\)](#) together.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) awarded Sudie Back, PhD, a professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at MUSC, and Anka Vujanovic, PhD, a professor of psychology and director of the Trauma and Stress Studies Center at UH, a \$3,461,217 grant from to conduct a collaborative multisite randomized controlled trial examining the effectiveness of combining cognitive processing therapy (CPT) for PTSD and relapse prevention (RP) for AUD, according to a [HU news release](#).

“A substantial proportion of individuals with AUD also meet criteria for PTSD,” Vujanovic told HU. “The co-occurrence of AUD/PTSD is characterized by more severe symptomatology, greater functional impairment, increased suicide risk and poorer treatment outcomes as compared to either disorder alone.”

Cognitive processing therapy for PTSD and relapse prevention for alcohol use disorder are among the most widely used and effective behavioral treatments. Vujanovic developed and pilot tested a successful therapy manual that combines the two treatments. “The preliminary data demonstrate safety, feasibility, high rates of retention and patient satisfaction,” Back said.

The trial’s primary objective is to examine the efficacy of the combined treatments in reducing the frequency and quantity of alcohol use and the severity of PTSD symptoms among people with AUD and PTSD. Researchers hope that their findings will lead to a new area of trauma-focused integrative treatment for AUD/PTSD that enhances patient reach, retention and clinical outcomes, according to the news release.

“This study aligns closely with the mission of NIAAA in that it aims to produce maximally efficacious behavioral interventions for AUD and comorbid psychiatric disorders such as PTSD,” said Vujanovic. “The findings from this study will provide new information to advance the science of AUD/PTSD comorbidity and innovate clinical practice.”

