Single Treatment Offers Durable Relief from PTSD

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Doctors at Walter Reed Army Medical Center are reporting that a single application of a local anesthetic to nerves in the neck provided profound and durable relief from post-traumatic stress disorder in two combat veterans who weren't helped by typical psych meds.

The procedure, known as stellate ganglion block (SGB), has actually been around since 1925. The stellate ganglion is a bundle of nerves in the neck near the C6 vertebrae. Doctors inject the anesthetic ropivacaine into the tissue near the nerves while a person is lying still. The treatment must be applied by an anesthesiologist, and does carry the risk of seizures, but has been used successfully for people suffering form chronic pain, depression and breast cancer survivors who experience hot flashes and night awakenings.

"Although an admittedly small series of patients, our report points to a potentially effective and readily accessible approach for PTSD treatments," said Sean Mulvaney, MD, the principle author of the study. "We believe that further investigation of this intervention is warranted and may provide alternatives and/or complements to current psychological and pharmacological treatments for PTSD, an increasingly prevalent condition in military populations."

I can only imagine what a combat vet must experience. I'm eternally grateful for the sacrifices they make for all of us, and am glad to see that researchers are making progress on treatments for PTSD. For the full details on the study click here.

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