

The use of art therapy for “unmasking” moral injuries

PROJECT GOAL

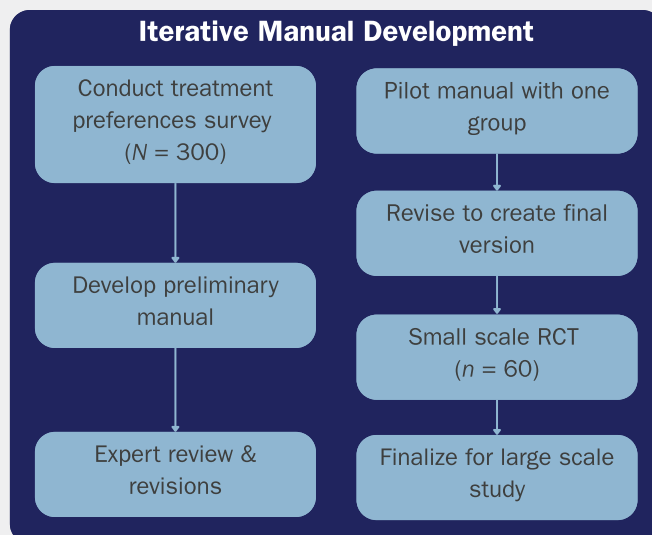
This project aims to develop a treatment manual for the mask making directive informed by a survey of the behavioral health treatment preferences of military-connected individuals. Additionally, a comprehensive checklist of morally injurious events will be developed and evaluated.

BACKGROUND

Moral injury is prevalent among military populations and can lead to significant mental health problems, substance use, social withdrawal, and increased suicide ideation. Mask making allows patients to visually represent their experiences, promoting control, processing, and narrative reconsolidation.

STUDY DESIGN

The “Treatment Preferences” survey will inform recommendations for group composition (e.g., mixed sex or rank). The mask making treatment manual will be developed and evaluated iteratively from feedback from patients, art therapists, clinical psychologists, and subject matter experts. Following a small scale RCT (treatment as usual vs. treatment as usual + mask making), the manual will be finalized for large-scale study. Currently, there is not a validated measure for identifying moral injurious events. The Moral Injury Life Events Checklist (MI-LEC) is being developed to address this gap.



MI-LEC Development

Phenomenological
Interviews (N = 15)

Cognitive Interviewing
(N = 25)

Lawshe Content Validity
(N = 25)

Psychometric Evaluation
(N = 350)

CURRENT STATUS

The “Treatment Preferences” survey is currently under review by the USU IRB. The MILEC IRB is in development and will be submitted in June 2025. Manual development will begin this quarter.

FUNDING

Mask Making, led by Dr. Paxton Willing in collaboration with the Defense Intrepid Network, is funded by a DoD extramural grant (\$1,151,636). The project will be conducted from September 2024 through September 2027.