Therapeutic Sailing – Making a Measurable Impact on Community Mental Health with your Existing Resources

By

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Who are we?

• Park City Sailing Association (PCSA): A non-profit community sailing club located in Park City Utah. Represented by Ken Block.

• Veterans Healthcare Administration Whole Health Flagship Site located at the VA Healthcare system in Salt Lake City, Utah. Represented by William (Bill) Marchand.
Who are we?

• Collaborators and co-Author:

  • Park City Sailing Association:
    • Scott VerMerris
    • Karl Paulsen
    • Hannah Halsted
    • Nicole Paradiso

  • VA Salt Lake City Healthcare System:
    • William Klinger
    • Michael Scott
    • Steve Sheppard
    • Elizabeth Shubin
    • Julie Newton
    • Tracy Herrmann
    • Brandon Yabko
Today’s Presentation

• PCSA’s therapeutic sailing programs
  • Therapeutic sailing is a component of PCSA’s Out Reach Program

• The development, implementation and evaluation of a therapeutic sailing program for Veterans with psychiatric and substance use disorders
  • Partnership between the Park City Sailing Association (PCSA) and the VA Salt Lake City Health Care System

• Publication: Safety and Psychological Impact of Sailing Adventure Therapy Among Veterans with Substance Use Disorders
What is Therapeutic Sailing?

• Using exposure to sailing as a means to facilitate healing as well as enhance wellbeing and quality of life

• May or may not include sailing instruction

• May or may not include a “therapy” component, such as mindfulness

• Therapeutic sailing is a natural progression of adaptive sailing
Potential benefits to the sport of sailing

• Making sailing more socially impactful

• Develop community partnerships (Diversity – Equity – Inclusion)

• Grow the sport of sailing
Why How and Who

• From a sailor’s perspective
WHY

• Addiction & Mental Health Crisis in America
• COSTLY EPIDEMIC
• Recreational Therapy
• Conference Theme: Diversity - Equity - Inclusion
• Not SOS
WHY PCSA

• A brief history of Park City Sailing Association and how we got into the therapeutic sailing business
How

• Extension of existing adaptive program or New stand-alone program

• Single “event” or a sustainable annual program

• Utilize club’s program boats and staff or individual members boats
How

- PC Sailing Experience
  - Utilize our community sailing fleet
  - Skippers Minimum Level 1 Small or Keel boat
  - High Level Communicators!
  - Coordination and Dock Support
How

• Event Overview
  • Each event has clear – pre-established goals
  • Intake Process
  • Sailing Instructions
  • Connection to therapy
  • Sailing time
WHO

• Local VA

• Residential / Outpatient addiction recovery programs

• National and State Recreational Therapy Associations

• Local hospitals

• Local mental health programs

• Use your imagination
Why Who and How

• From a VA psychiatrist’s (and Veteran’s and sailor’s) perspective
Why

• Many Veterans suffer from psychiatric and substance use disorders
• Current treatments are often only partially effective
• Lack of treatment engagement is often a barrier
• VA is interested in developing and evaluating complementary interventions
• VA has a long history of utilizing recreation therapies
Who

• Salt Lake City VA mental health and addictive disorders treatment programs

• Psychotherapy, recreation therapy and nursing staff
How

• Potential therapeutic mechanisms
  • Enhanced self-efficacy from learning and mastery of new skills (if includes sailing instruction)
  • Exposure to nature (wind, water, movement)
  • Experience of pleasure
  • Comradery with other participants
How

- Potential therapeutic benefits
  - Improved treatment engagement
  - Enhanced response to primary treatment for condition (e.g. psychotherapy)
  - Develop a more health lifestyle as a result of becoming a long-term sailor
How

• Evaluation
  • Pre and post-sailing psychological instruments and surveys
  • Safety
  • Enjoyment of experience scale
  • Changes in long-term treatment outcomes
How

• Evaluation
How

• PCSA – VA Programs

  • Conducted during the summers of 2017 and 2018
How

• Two programs:
  
  • Sailing only
    - Veterans participate in one or more afternoon sailing experiences with some sailing instruction
  
  • Sailing + mindfulness training
    - Closed group of Veterans participates in 3 to 5 sessions of mindfulness training & sailing instruction
PCSA – VA Program Preliminary Outcomes

• Sailing only program
  • 22 Veterans who participated in sailing and 22 controls in substance use disorder residential treatment program
  • Participants reported the experience to be pleasurable and calming
  • Pre- to post-sailing increase in psychological flexibility
  • Participation associated with greater likelihood of successfully completing residential treatment program

PCSA – VA Program Preliminary Outcomes

• Sailing + mindfulness training program
  • Summer of 2017
    • 21 Veterans who participated in 5 session sailing and mindfulness training
    • Participants reported the experience to be pleasurable and calming
    • Pre- to post-program increase in trait mindfulness
  • Summer of 2018
    • 25 Veterans who participated in 3 session sailing and mindfulness training
    • Participants reported the experience to be pleasurable and calming
    • Pre- to post-program increase in state mindfulness and psychological flexibility
Next Steps

• Continue research

• Disseminate to other clubs

• You can help
Four Sailing Stories
Questions and Contact Information

• Ken Block:  ken.block@Parkcitysailing.org

• Bill Marchand:  William.marchand@va.gov
Your Opinion Matters

Please open the NSPS app and complete the session survey found in the menu bar for a chance to win a free drink ticket!

Thank you for attending this session