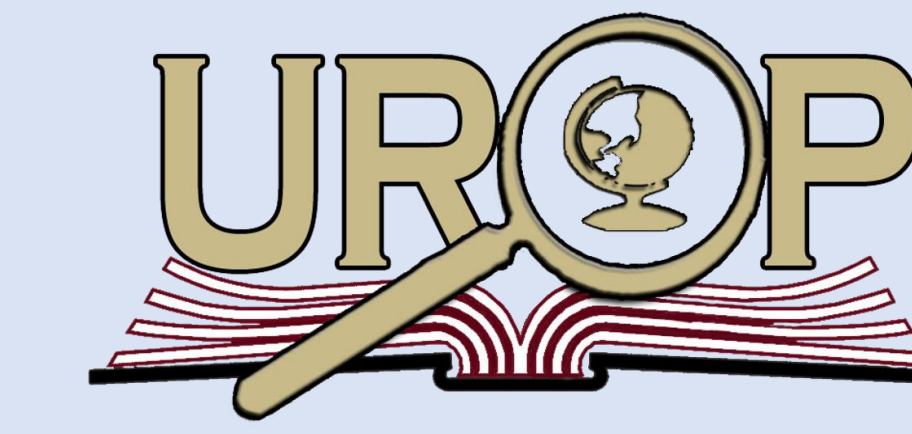


Is Imagery Rehearsal Therapy an Effective Treatment for Nightmares among People with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder? A Review

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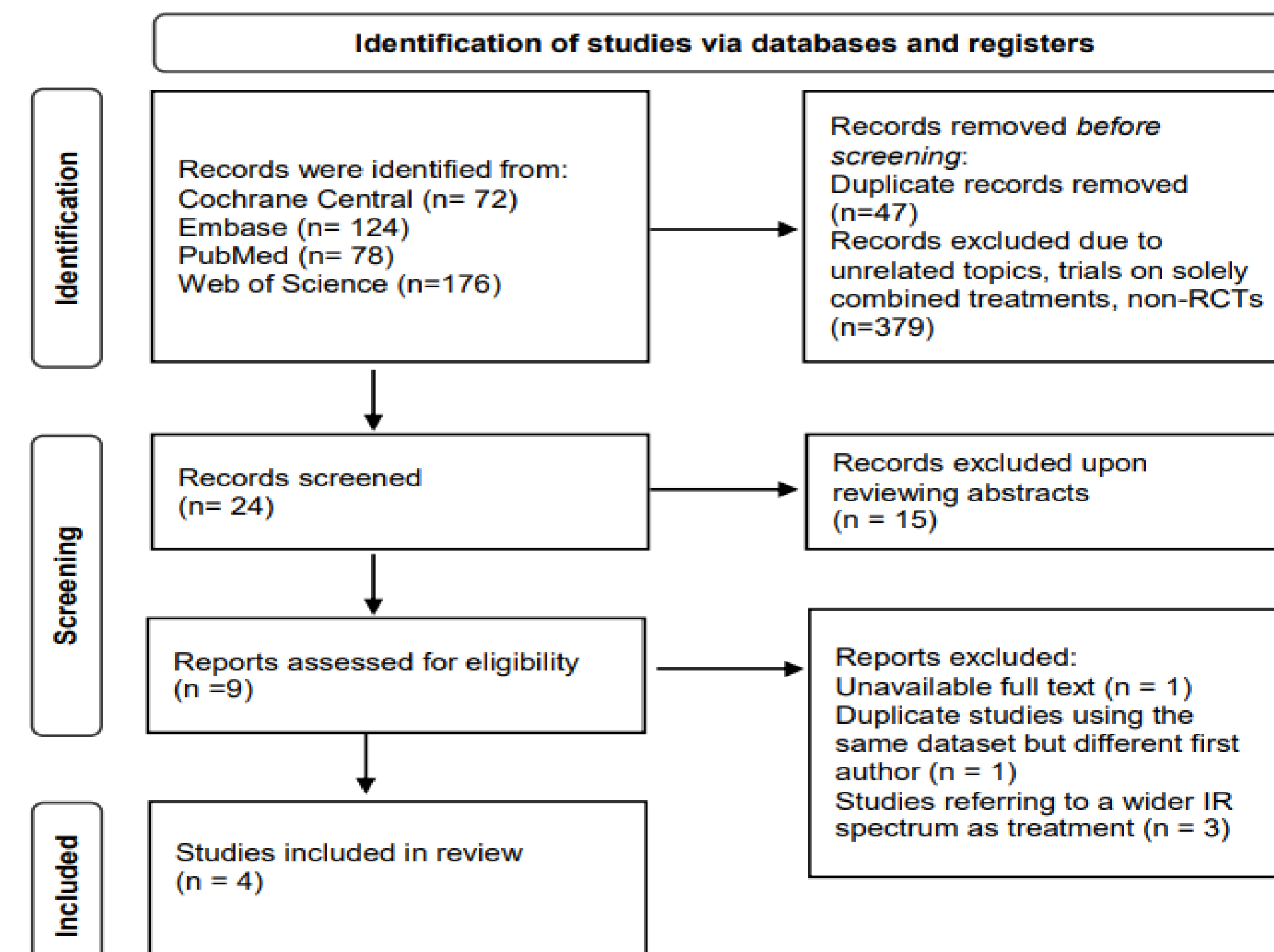
Abstract:

This systematic review is an examination conducted in order to identify and synthesize all relevant studies, that meet the eligibility criteria, in an effort to determine the effectiveness of Imagery Rehearsal Therapy (IRT) in addressing nightmare occurrence/intensity in patients with Post-traumatic Stress Disorder(PTSD). The overall goal of using a systematic review was to compile a meticulous summary of the primary sources that have already conducted their experiments and research on this topic. The focus of this systematic review was on randomized controlled trials (RCTs) that highlighted IRT as their chosen treatment to treat patients suffering from PTSD-induced nightmares. RCTs were searched for and gathered from a total of four databases using identical search terms as well as exclusion criteria. Of all the four studies chosen and examined in this review (Krakow et al., Thunker et al., Belleview et al., and Sandahl et al.), The same conclusion was drawn: Imagery rehearsal therapy aids in the decrease of nightmare symptoms, in terms of frequency and severity, as a result of PTSD. This result was seen regardless of the sample.

Background:

Imagery Rehearsal Therapy (IRT) is a form of cognitive behavior therapy in which the clients are instructed to recall, rescript, and imaginatively rehearse their nightmares (Swaim,2022). The main goal of this intervention is to create space for clients to take control over triggering and persistent internal narratives (Haeyen, 2021, Tull, 2020, Tartakovsky, 2021). It is one of the most promising treatments to improve overall sleep quality by targeting nightmares due to quality evidence found that indicates reduced and lasting nightmare severity (Sandy, 2021, Nappi,2010, Haeyen,2020). Nightmares are common in individuals who experience Post traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or related symptoms (PTSS) as a result of traumatic events (i.e. any form of severe victimization). The overall aim of this review is to identify and synthesize all relevant studies that meet the eligibility criteria in an effort to examine the literature on the effectiveness of IRT.

Figure 1. Quorum Flowchart



Methods:

This systematic review focused only on randomized controlled trials(RCTs) that indicated Imagery rehearsal Therapy as their chosen treatment for participants suffering from PTSD-induced nightmares, To find these RCTs, four databases were used; Cochrane CENTRAL, EMBASE, PubMed, and Web of Science. The following search terms were used, and searched in full text, in the order the databases were previously listed: “Imagery Rehearsal Therapy” and “PTSD”, “Imagery Rehearsal Therapy” and “Post Traumatic Stress Disorder” and “Randomized Control Trial”, “Imagery Rehearsal Therapy” and “Trauma” and “Randomized Control Trial”. Studies were included if they met the following criteria: The study was not already chosen from a previous databases search, The study utilized IRT as the sole treatment, and the study fit in the PICO (patient/population, intervention, comparison and outcomes) criteria. (See Figure 1)

Discussion:

In all of the four studies examined in this review (Krakow et al., Thunker et al., Belleview et al., and Sandahl et al.), we are able to draw the same conclusion: Imagery rehearsal therapy aids in the decrease of nightmare symptoms, in terms of frequency and severity, as a result of PTSD. This result was seen regardless of the sample. Krakow et al and Belleview examined the effects of IRT in sexual assault victims, while Thunker examined the same thing except in patients diagnosed with a nightmare disorder in people with depression and/or PTSD. Sandahl et al. explored the effectiveness of IRT in refugee populations. All RCTs used some collection of questionnaires/ indexes to collect the data and despite some of the different methods, similar results persisted.

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