



FIRST PETT Study Newsletter

Summer 2026 edition

Progress, research updates, and more



Table of Contents

2

Welcome

A message of welcome and thanks from the FIRST PETT Study team

3

Study Update

Recruitment is ongoing and 92 people have been randomised into the trial

4

Conference Connections

The team attended two conferences last month

6

Understanding FIRST

Learn about how we are studying the mechanisms of FIRST therapy

8

Meet the Team

A profile of Dr Aldo Conti, Research Associate on the trial

9

Out and About

Professor Jackie Sturt reflects on her visit to the Shrine of Remembrance and Royal Botanical Gardens in Melbourne

11

Next Steps

Keep up with our plans for the next few months

1

Welcome to our Summer Newsletter!

Welcome to the Summer issue of the FIRST PETT newsletter! Thank you for your continued support, involvement, and interest in this work. Your participation makes this research possible, and we are truly grateful.

In this issue, we'll share the latest updates from the FIRST PETT trial, including our current progress and what we hope to achieve over the coming months.

We will also dive into the trial's work on mechanisms, which is helping us to understand

exactly how FIRST therapy works. Alongside this, we will introduce our team member Aldo, whose work focuses on this aspect of the trial.

You can also read reflections from Jackie, one of the trial's Chief Investigators, on her visit to the Shrine of Remembrance and Royal Botanical Gardens in Melbourne, Australia, and learn about our recent conference experiences.

We hope you enjoy this issue and learning more about the study and team. We look forward to sharing more updates and insights with you in the months ahead. Thank you again for all your support!

- The FIRST PETT Study Research Team

Study Update

Veteran Participants

Thanks to your interest and the hard work of our Assistant Psychologists, 92 veterans have now been randomised into the study. Among those 92 veterans, 68 have now completed the 6-week data collection stage, 46 have completed the 12-week data collection stage, and 10 have now completed the 20-week data collection stage.

These later stages of data collection are very important to help us understand how FIRST therapy works over time. Keep an eye on future newsletters for updates on how this is progressing!

Recruitment

We are still recruiting veterans onto the trial, so our study team are interested in speaking with organisations or networks that can help us reach veterans in need. If you can think of any groups that might be interested, we'd love to hear from you! Please contact us at firstpett@kcl.ac.uk



Conference Connections

Some members of the FIRST PETT research team recently took to the road to promote the study! They attended both the [Centre for Evidence for the Armed Forces Community Conference](#) and the [Veterans' Mental Health Conference](#) in London in May.

Professor Neil Greenberg, Co-Investigator, talked about outcomes of our earlier feasibility and proof-of-concept studies and Claire Ballard, Assistant Trial Manager, presented a poster on the FIRST PETT study. On this page and the next, you can see photos of some of the team members Claire, Rebecca Rogers, and Aldo Conti with the poster, as well as Peter Quick and Alison Cotton from our lived experience Advisory Group. Everyone who attended the conferences found the experience invaluable. The main purpose of attending was to raise awareness of FIRST PETT with organisations who could help us to promote the study and recruit participants. However, it was also stimulating to learn about other research going on in the field and connect with some of the large number of support organisations there are in the Armed Forces community.



Aldo Conti and Claire Ballard



Alison Cotton and Peter Quick

Conference Connections

Hear from our attendees at the conferences:

“As a researcher who is relatively new to the Armed Forces population, I was amazed by the sense of community. There are so many people passionate about improving the life experiences and outcomes of serving and ex-service personnel.”

– Claire Ballard, FIRST PETT Assistant Trial Manager

“I learned an immense amount and it was frankly heartening to see the efforts put in for veteran health...I think that many veterans would benefit from such an insight; to know that they are not forgotten about.”

– Peter Quick, ex-RAF medic, FIRST PETT Lived Experience Advisory Group member



Peter Quick and Rebecca Rogers



Peter Quick speaking with a conference attendee

Understanding FIRST

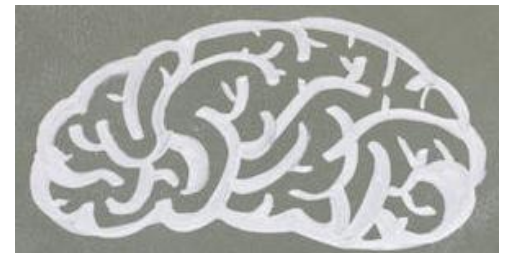
In the FIRST PETT Study, we are not only looking at whether FIRST therapy works, but also *how* it works.

As part of this, we ask participants to complete short tasks. Most participants complete these within 24 hours of receiving them. Some focus on memory (how we take in and recall information), and others on retention (how well information stays with us over time). These tasks give us important clues about how FIRST therapy may be helping the brain process and hold on to information differently after trauma.

By taking part, you are helping us understand what changes during therapy and what matters most for improving PTSD symptoms. This will help us make FIRST better for future patients.

If you are taking part, thank you for taking the time to complete these tasks – your contribution makes a real difference.

Read on to understand how we think FIRST therapy works to help with PTSD symptoms...



Understanding FIRST

Based on the science of FIRST, we think **5 things might explain why FIRST could help people with PTSD:**

1. It might help people process memories in a more emotionally neutral way
2. It might help people move their attention away from trauma
3. It might help people manage their difficult emotions
4. It might help people feel better about themselves
5. It might change how people store and manage traumatic memories

By completing tasks within our trial, you are helping us understand which of these is happening when people engage with FIRST therapy.

Next: Meet Aldo, who works on the mechanisms part of the trial...

Meet the Team



Dr Aldo Alberto Conti

Research Associate

In the FIRST PETT trial, I work as a Research Associate, contributing to the delivery of the study, with a particular focus on neurocognitive assessments (i.e. computer-based tasks and self-report questionnaires, both completed remotely on a phone or computer). These help us understand how the intervention works at a mechanistic level. My work focuses on processes such as attention, emotional regulation, and memory, with the aim of better understanding how FIRST therapy can improve PTSD symptoms. I am also involved in coordinating aspects of the trial and supporting dissemination activities across the project.

I was particularly drawn to FIRST PETT because of its strong focus on supporting military veterans with PTSD. As a veteran myself, having served in the Italian Army, this work is personally meaningful, and I value being part of a collaborative effort that brings together clinicians, researchers, and the veteran community to improve care and outcomes.

One thing I would like people to know about this work is that the tasks participants complete are an important part of understanding how FIRST therapy may support a reduction in PTSD symptoms. By looking at how people respond to these tasks over the course of the trial, we can begin to see what is changing during therapy and what may be driving these improvements. This helps us move closer to understanding the mechanisms underlying FIRST therapy and how this intervention can be integrated into standard mental healthcare for veterans with PTSD.

Out and About



In February, Chief Investigator Professor Jackie Sturt [pictured left] travelled to Melbourne, Australia. Read her reflections on visiting the Shrine of Remembrance and Royal Botanical Gardens during her trip.

During February 2026, I attended conferences and research meetings in and around Melbourne, Australia. During a free afternoon I had the moving pleasure of visiting the Royal Botanic Gardens and the Shrine of Remembrance. The gardens offered an unexpected reflection on the impact of military service on the families of veterans as I enjoyed the shade of a tree dedicated to the War Veterans' Wives Association for their care of Australia's valiant veterans of all wars.

The Shrine itself is a remarkable structure with my attention caught to large stone structural enclosures at each of its four corners. Each held a different purpose for the Shrine with one being a walled garden for high shrubs and a second housing a large poppy sculpture. The walls were jagged in a very particular design, representing the lines and build of the tunnels and trenches in WW1, jagged to minimise the impacts of bomb blasts entering the tunnels. A friendly guide saw my interest and took me to an outside area where at 11am on the 11th November the sun casts the same jagged shadow into the courtyard below.



Tree dedicated to the War Veterans' Wives Association.

Out and About

Continued from previous page...

Inside the Shrine I felt privileged to feel that I was meeting Australian women veterans in a curated exhibition to shine a light on their service. Being a nurse myself, and one who throughout nurse training had expected to join the Queen Alexandra's Nursing Corps when I qualified, it was humbling to read the brief biographical stories of the military nurse veterans and the impact of their deployments. I have more photos of that afternoon than of any other during what was an enjoyable academic visit to Victoria.



*The Shrine of
Remembrance*



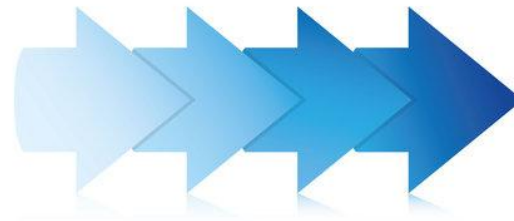
*Sculpture at the
Shrine*



*Jill Edens, military
nurse veteran*

Next Steps...

- ⚙ We are still recruiting participants into the trial. If you know UK military veterans/ex-service personnel who might benefit from taking part, please let us know.
- ⚙ Our participants are completing the follow-up questionnaires, with a £15 Amazon voucher available for each completed set to express our appreciation.
- ⚙ Our Facebook page is up and running! Follow us at [FIRST PETT research trial](#) to keep up to date with the study and day-to-day news.
- ⚙ Do you have any experiences you'd like to share with the community through this newsletter? Get in touch!



Resources

Are you in need of help right now? Contact:

Samaritans – Telephone: 116 123

Emergency services – Telephone: 999

Do you have questions, comments, or ideas for us? Email: firstpett@kcl.ac.uk

Visit our study website: www.inspirewellbeing.org →

