

PTSD: KEY FEATURES AND WAYS OF TREATMENT

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Actuality. Since Ukraine is currently suffering from war conflict in the East, a lot of those who return might be victims of PTSD. The task of the state and its citizens is to know what it is, how to treat it and help those who suffer. Symptoms of trauma-related mental disorders (sexual assault, warfare, traffic collisions, terroristic acts etc.) have been documented since the time of the ancient Greeks. [2, 271–280.] The term “posttraumatic stress disorder” (PTSD) came into use in the 1970s in large part due to the diagnoses of U.S. military veterans of the Vietnam War [5, 336].

The aim of the research is to analyze basic features of PTSD and most effective ways of treating it.

The object of the research is PTSD symptoms and its general treatment.

The subject of the research is learning the key features of this state and ways of treating it to help those suffering.

To achieve the tasks set **the method** of analysis and synthesis of scientific literature was used.

Most knowledge regarding PTSD comes from studies in high-income countries, especially the USA [4]. Symptoms of PTSD fall into 4 categories [2; 3].

- Intrusive thoughts such as repeated, involuntary memories; distressing dreams or flashbacks of the traumatic event.
- Avoiding people, places, activities, objects and situations that bring on distressing memories.
- Ongoing and distorted beliefs about oneself or others (e.g., “I am bad,” “No one can be trusted”); ongoing fear, horror, anger, etc.; feeling detached or estranged from others.
- Being irritable and having angry outbursts; being easily startled; or having problems concentrating or sleeping.

Many people experience symptoms in the days following the event. For a person to be diagnosed with PTSD, however, symptoms last for more than a month and often persist for months and sometimes years. Many individuals

develop symptoms within 3 months of the trauma, but they may appear later. For people with PTSD the symptoms cause significant distress or problems functioning. PTSD often occurs with other related conditions, such as depression, alcohol/drug use, memory problems and other physical and mental health problems.

Both (talk) psychotherapy and medication provide effective treatments for PTSD, though researches show psychotherapy being more beneficial [6]:

- Cognitive Processing Therapy modifies painful negative emotions (such as shame, guilt, etc.) and beliefs (such as “I have failed”; “the world is dangerous”) due to the trauma.
- Prolonged Exposure Therapy uses repeated, detailed imagining of the trauma or progressive exposures to symptom “triggers” in a safe, controlled way to help a person face and gain control of fear and distress and learn to cope.
- Group therapy: sharing experiences in a comfortable and non-judgmental setting; helping realize that many people would have responded the same way.

Medication helps to control the symptoms of PTSD. In addition, the symptom relief from medication allows many people to participate more effectively in psychotherapy.

In the USA there is a special Department of Veteran Affairs and they provide a wide range of options to help veterans and their families to adopt to new realities (even creation of a mobile application) [<https://www.ptsd.va.gov/>]. As for Ukraine a lot has been done by volunteers and the authorities are at the initial stage of creating some centralized and standardized approaches to treating problems related to PTSD. Currently there is a special State Agency for Veterans (<http://dsvv.gov.ua>) as well as numerous volunteer’s organizations. Some experts note there will be better if they all combine their efforts.

Conclusions. As it is written in “I returned: Psychological Advisor” published by the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine in 2016 [1]: “The war changes us all... Therefore, finding an understanding is a collaborative process in which both parties must show patience to each other, respect and willingness to compromise”. For former soldiers it is sometimes very difficult to recognize the problem after having passed such trials, not wanting to look weak in the eyes of beloved ones ... At the same time, one should not expect that even if something is going on, it will eventually run off by itself. The ability to recognize need for help is wisdom. Asking for help is strength”.

References

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