PRIMA 2020 WEBINAR

Fireside Chat: When PTSD shows up at Work

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Learning objectives

- What is PTSD what triggers how it can last
- State specific considerations
- Treating provider challenges
- Employer programs
- Screening tools
- Treatment considerations
- Return to work strategies

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), is a complex disorder in which the affected person's memory, emotional responses, intellectual processes, and nervous system have all been disrupted by one or more traumatic experiences.

Source DSMV

PTSD defined

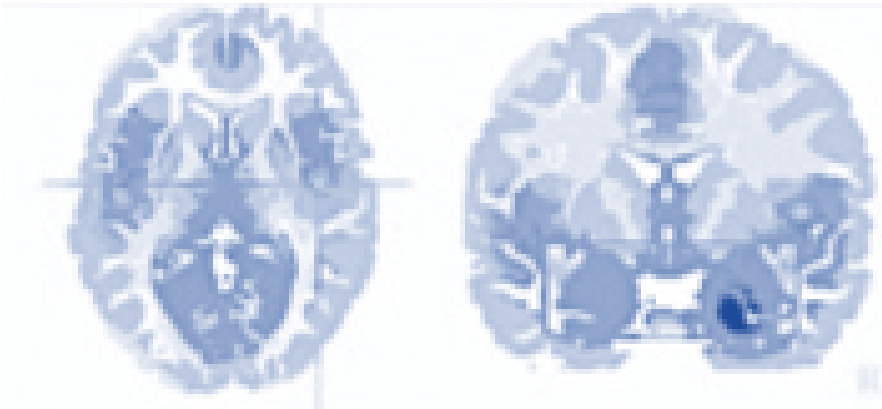
- The traumatic event includes both of the following:
  - The person **experienced, witnessed, or was confronted** with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others
  - The person's response involved intense **fear, helplessness, or horror**

PTSD considerations

- The worse the trauma, the more likely a person will develop PTSD, and the worse the symptoms
- The most severely affected are:
  - Unable to work
  - Have trouble with relationships
  - Have great difficulty parenting their children

PTSD

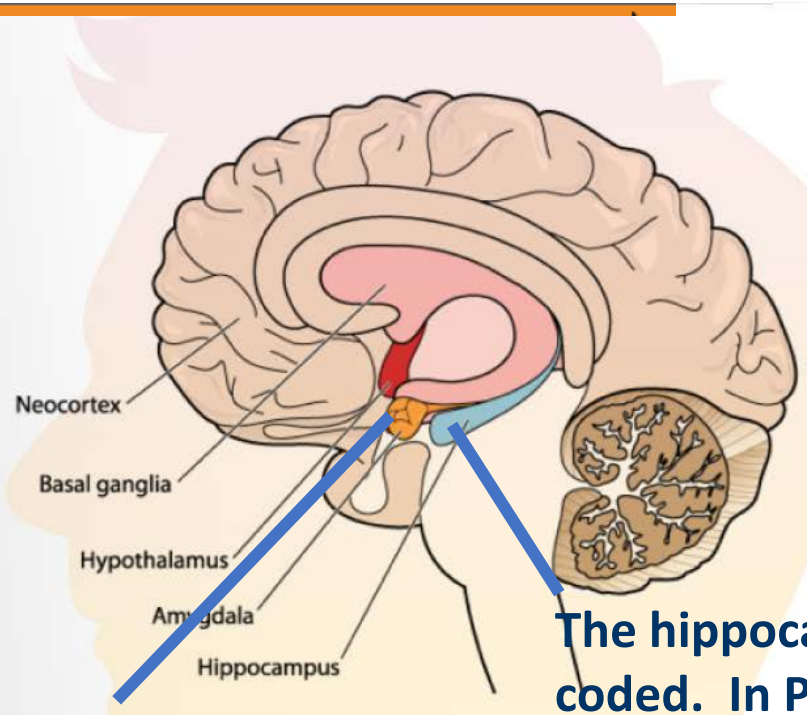
- Research has shown that PTSD changes the biology of the brain
  - MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) and PET (positron emission tomography) scans show changes in the way memories are stored in the brain
  - PTSD is an environmental shock that changes your brain, and scientists do not know if it is reversible



PTSD prognosis and outcomes

- Complete recovery may occur within months, but in others symptoms of PTSD may persist for years after the trauma
  - Affected by the type and duration of the trauma
- New stress or grief may cause PTSD symptoms to recur
- Maximum Medical Improvement can be expected to occur within 12 months of treatment or less and may be dependent on pre-existing and/or associated psychiatric diagnoses
- Better outcomes for those who:
  - Were functioning at a high level **prior** to the onset of symptoms
  - Have **no other mental illness**
  - Seek **treatment early**
  - Have a **strong social network** of family and friends
  - Who are **not re-exposed** to trauma

Etiology of PTSD



amygdala the flight, fight, sending signals to the adrenals that start the stress response

The hippocampus memories are hard coded. In PTSD It can store memories in the wrong place and it feels like they are happening again real time, instead of being memories

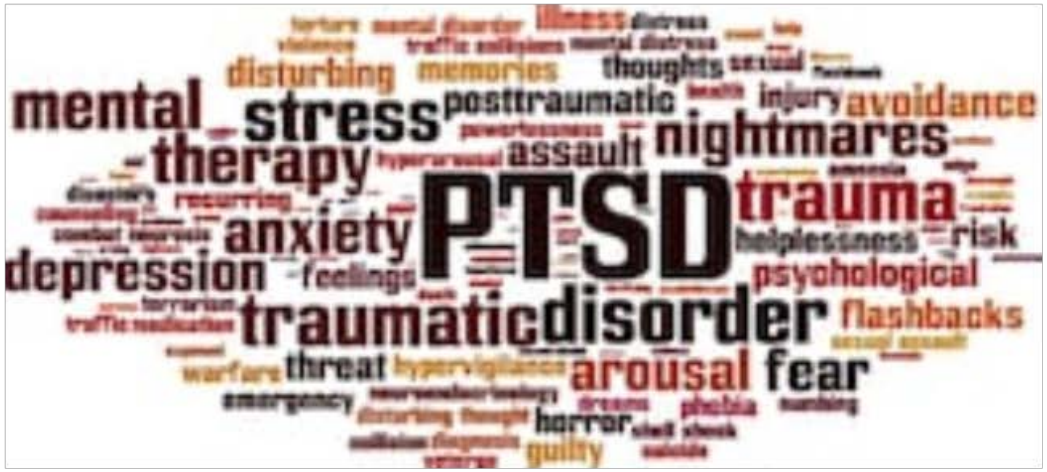
The provider challenges with PTSD

- What providers need to consider
- Acute stress disorder has the same symptoms shorter duration
- Other anxiety disorders
- Depressive disorders
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder
- Substance abuse
- Personality disorders/borderline personality disorder

How PTSD Shows Up at Work

- The aftermath of someone with an unknown diagnosis
- An event in the workplace
- Anger or bad behavior exhibited toward others
- Time away from work
- Unknown Triggers
- Domestic issues

Events that might trigger PTSD

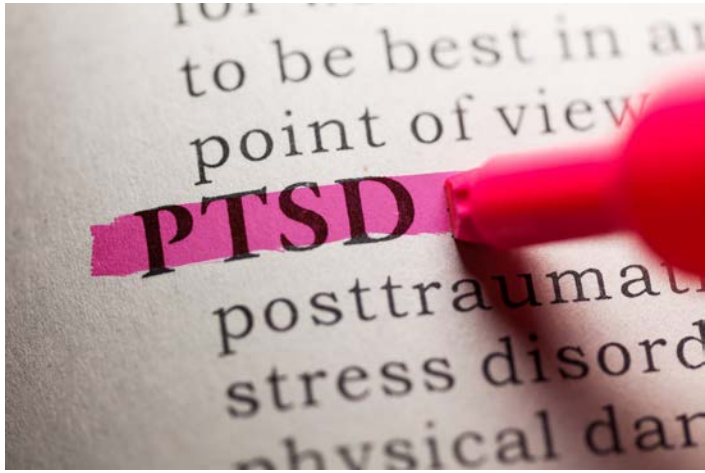


Post-traumatic stress disorder **symptoms** are generally grouped into three types:

- Intrusive memories
- Increased anxiety or emotional arousal
- Avoidance and numbing



PTSD related conditions



- Acute stress disorder
- Anger
- Anniversary reactions
- Chronic Pain
- Depression
- Relationship issues including divorce and violence
- Nightmares
- Alcohol use/Drug use
- Sleep disturbances
- Employment problems

PTSD treatment - Psychotherapy

- Psychotherapy for PTSD involves helping the person learn skills to manage symptoms and develop ways of coping
- Therapy also aims to teach the person and his or her family about the disorder, and help the person work through the fears associated with the traumatic event
- A variety of psychotherapy approaches are used to treat people with PTSD



Non-pharmacology treatment approaches

- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)
- Exposure therapy
- Psychodynamic therapy
- Family therapy
- Group therapy
- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)
- Stress inoculation therapy
- Mindfulness meditation

Experimental treatments

- Medical Marijuana
  - 24 states list it as a qualifying condition
  - Lack of clinical studies

- Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA) *ectasy*
  - Soon entering phase 3 clinical trial
  - Phase 2 trials resulted in 56% of patients no longer qualifying as PTSD after 2 months of treatment and 68% after 12 months of treatment
  - Small number which could change with larger group
  - Used only in conjunction with psychotherapy

PTSD treatment - drug therapy

- Drug therapy can reduce the anxiety, depression, and insomnia often experienced with PTSD
- Several kinds of antidepressant drugs have achieved improvement in most (but not all) clinical trials, and *some other classes of drugs have shown promise*
- ***At this time no particular drug has emerged as a definitive treatment for PTSD****, although medication is clearly useful for symptom relief and make it possible for* patients to participate in psychotherapy



Selective Serotonin re-uptake inhibitors

- Examples of the SSRI's and some typical dosage ranges are listed below:
  - Sertraline (Zoloft) 50 mg to 200 mg daily
  - Citalopram (Celexa) 20 mg to 60 mg daily
  - Paroxetine (Paxil) 20 to 60 mg daily
  - Fluoxetine (Prozac) 20 mg to 60 mg daily



State specific

- Mental only injuries covered first responders
  - Minnesota
  - Florida
  - Washington
  - Texas
  - Nebraska
  - Colorado
- Have had coverage not just for first responders
  - Massachusetts
  - New Jersey
  - New York
  - Rhode Island

What to expect when PTSD occurs in the workplace….

- Intangible
- Carefully look at diagnosis from a DSM V aspect
- Specific signs and symptoms
- Specific functional limitations
- Treatment must be consistent with care
- Time away from work can be considered an aspect of the treatment plan

PTSD claim considerations

- May involve more complex medical issues
- Claims may have longer than expected duration
- Clinical involvement recommended early in the claim process
- Physical healing may be delayed if PTSD is not treated appropriately
- Appropriate Rx
- Refer to specialists with experience treating PTSD Set clear expectations of RTW

Employer programs to address PTSD

- Critical Incident response
  - Chance to express feelings
  - Understand that what is being experienced is a normal reaction
  - Allow management to show concern for colleagues
  - A chance to reduce stress
- EAP
  - Ongoing guidance and counselling
- Provide Information about positive ways to cope with stress
- Specific Trauma programs
- Expert Resources

Screening tools for PTSD

- Biopsychosocial Risk Factor screening
- Life Event Checklist
  - 17 items that enable a person to identify if it happened to them, they witnessed it, or learned about it
- PLC- C Short version of PTSD checklist for civilians
  - Can be reduced to 2 items or 6 items
  - Enable self report of feelings, reactions, memories and dreams
- Nurse case managers role

Work accommodation considerations

May include

- Modifying specific environments that trigger memories of or reactions to the original stressor
- Introducing the individual to new or stressful situations gradually under close supervision and support
- Providing flexibility in scheduling for medical therapy appointments
- Allowing work-at-home or job-sharing opportunities
- Providing conflict resolution mechanisms
- Providing guidelines for feedback and proactive management of problem areas
- Reducing or eliminating activities in which the safety of self and/or others is contingent upon constant and/or high levels of alertness (e.g., driving or operating machinery)

https://www.mdguidelines.com/mda/post-traumatic-stress-disorder

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Work accommodation considerations

Possible limitations that may need to be accommodated

- Attentiveness/Concentration
- Decreased Stamina/Fatigue
- Executive Functioning Deficits
- Managing Time
- **Memory Loss (see reference slides for additional information)**
- Mental Confusion
- Organizing/Planning/Prioritizing
- **Stress Intolerance (see subsequent slide for additional information)**

Please refer to the JAN link, *https://askjan.org/disabilities/Post-Traumatic-Stress-Disorder-PTSD.cfm?cssearch=2038745_1, for specific accommodation suggestions per limitation*

Key take-aways

- Early identification and treatment is important and successful
- Job accommodation may be extraordinary
- Show compassion and empathy
- You do not know about past exposures

Thank you for your attention

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