

## Combat Related Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

## Combat Related Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

### **Introduction**

Post traumatic stress disorder has become a widespread psychological problem of our society. Although there are several causes of the occurrence of PTSD; but, combat has found to be the most major factor of PTSD. It has been found that combat is the contributing factor to PTSD and it is considered as the leading cause of PTSD amongst veterans (Fragedakis, 2014). This paper aims to focus on the symptoms, effects, therapies and treatments of PTSD. In doing so, the paper will specifically focus on the combat related PTSD.

### **Scope of Paper**

As the occurrence of combat related PTSD has become common and widespread in our society; thus, there is a great significance of emphasizing on the symptoms, effects and treatments of this illness. This research paper will be helpful in suggesting appropriate therapies which are being provided to the patients of combat related PTSD (Peterson et al., 2011). It has been found that several new treatments and therapies have been proposed in order to effectively deal with this major illness in our society.

### **Symptoms of Combat Related PTSD**

There are several physical as well as psychological symptoms of PTSD such as depression, problems with memory, substance abuse etc. This illness is associated with several family and social life problems. Patients of PTSD experience difficulty in sleeping, flashbacks, nightmares and they feel emotionally numb. At present, there are millions of people who feel

that their lives have gone through terrible moments (Peterson et al., 2011). The veterans in United States have been observed with the illness of PTSD. There are several researches available which have estimated the occurrence of PTSD amongst veterans. The statistics of researches are found to be daunting. According to the study of Sloan (2013), it is revealed that almost 18 suicides which have been committed by the veterans.

In addition to this, the study reveals that 1 out of every 5 soldiers is affected by the psychological disorder of PTSD. There are different symptoms which have been found by different studies. It has been found that several veterans become familiar with their illness after recognizing the symptoms of PTSD. The research has further revealed that chronic and long term exposure to several traumatic stressors result in the illness of PTSD among veterans. It has been further observed that the patients of PTSD seek to leave their family and social environments (Peterson et al., 2011). Such isolation of veterans also affects their performance during wars. Following are some major symptoms of PTSD which have been revealed from different researches.

### **Family and Marriage Relationships**

According to the research of Peterson et al. (2011), it is found that unexplained and sudden anger is the major factor which affects the marriages and family relationships. It has been revealed that the patient of PTSD also suffers from sudden and unexplained anger which affects the family and marriage relationships of an individual (Fragedakis, 2014). Hence, the major symptom of PTSD is sudden and unexplained anger.

**Absent from Life Events**

The patient of PTSD avoids crowd which is also the major symptom of this psychological disorder. It has been revealed that when the veteran finds trouble in crowds and they do not attend special life events like birthdays, graduations, funerals, reunions, weddings etc. then they can be considered as the patient of PTSD (Peterson et al., 2011).

**Difficulty on the Job**

The veteran who suffers from the psychological disorder of PTSD finds difficulty with concentration, clear thinking or memory. As a result of which, the veterans goes through the states of hyper-vigilance or hyper-arousal which causes distractions for them at their workplace (Fragedakis, 2014). In addition to this, the patients of PTSD also suffer from the feelings of over-control. As a result, these veterans show stressful reactions on the job through increased disappearance and absence from the workplace.

**Self-Doubt**

It has been revealed that the veterans who suffer from the psychological illness of PTSD doubt their capabilities and skills. This affects their life-death decisions as well as their actions in combat (Peterson et al., 2011). Hence, self doubt has found to be the one of the major symptoms of PTSD amongst veterans.

**Re-Experiencing Disturbing Incidents**

Veterans who suffer from PTSD re-experience traumatic incidents in terms of resurrect nightmares, undesired thoughts and recollections as well as flashbacks. As a result of these re-

experience of traumatic incidents, they suffer from stress which affects their overall performance (Fragedakis, 2014).

Above described signs are some of the major symptoms of combat related PTSD. Besides these symptoms, there are some other symptoms which have been highlighted by other researches.

### **Effects of Combat Related PTSD**

There are several serious consequences which are associated with combat related PTSD. It is found that the occurrence of PTSD among soldiers and veterans bring intimidating and threatening consequences to them (Peterson et al., 2011). Proper treatments are provided to the patients of combat related PTSD otherwise this illness worsens if not treated. Following are some major effects which are associated with untreated patient of combat related PTSD.

#### **Substance Addiction and Abuse**

It is found to be the most common effect of the illness of combat related PTSD. It has been found that the veterans who experience combat related PTSD, they start using and abusing alcohol and drugs in order to self medicate their PTSD related symptoms (Peterson et al., 2011). As a result, these veterans become addicted to alcohol and drugs.

#### **Interpersonal Relationship Problems**

It has been found that the veterans who suffer from the psychological disorder of PTSD become isolated (Fragedakis, 2014). They leave their social circle and family due to their increased aggression and anger.

**Isolation**

Isolation has found to be the major and common consequence of combat related PTSD. As the veterans who suffer from combat related PTSD experience the problem of self doubt; thus, they become uncontrolled and they become socially isolated (Fragedakis, 2014).

**Suicidal Ideation**

The suicidal risks increase among the patients of combat related PTSD. It is due to the fact that they suffer from disturbed family and marriage relationships (Pearrow, 2009). Their isolation and disturbed relationships result in the suicidal attempt.

**Treatments and Therapies for Combat Related PTSD**

There are several different therapies and treatments which have been proposed for treating combat related PTSD. Following are some new therapies and treatments which are being provided to the patients of combat related PTSD.

**Distress Tolerance Therapies**

Emotional detachment, dissociation or numbing is the major effects which are faced by the patients of combat related PTSD. It is found that in this illness the emotional system of the body gets anesthetized so as to deal with the devastating stress related to traumatic event (Pearrow, 2009). Thus, distress tolerance therapies are provided to the patients in the form of Commitment and Acceptance Therapy, Mindfulness approaches or Dialectical Behavior Therapy. These therapies reduce emotional avoidance and controls acceptance and attention.

### **Family and interpersonal Therapies**

The involvement of family in the treatment can be effective in order to treat the patient of combat related PTSD. It is due to the fact that this therapy provides social support to the patient which helps in dealing with relationship troubles, interpersonal aggression and relation detachment (Pearrow, 2009). These therapies incorporate present centered approaches which also appears as effective for the patients of combat related PTSD.

### **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy**

This therapy also appears to be effective for treating the patient of combat related PTSD. It is due to the fact that, this therapy replaces and challenges intrusive, painful, uncontrollable and negative thoughts regarding their traumatic experience (Schumm, 2013). This therapy further helps in constructing positive thoughts and ideas in the mind of the patient of combat related PTSD.

In addition to these treatments, the family therapy and mindfulness therapies are also appearing to be effective to treat the patients of combat related PTSD (Kehle-Forbes, 2014). Furthermore, experiential therapy has found to be the new and most effective treatment for the patients of this serious illness. Music therapy and equine therapy are also found to be effective and new therapies for curing the PTSD patients (Pearrow, 2009). Written exposure therapy has also found to be effective therapy for treating combat related PTSD.

### **Conclusion**

The information provided in the paper has helped in finding new and effective therapies and treatments which are being used to treat the patients of PTSD. It is further revealed that these

therapies are being focused significantly in the field of psychology so as to effectively deal with this problem. It is further found that combat is a contributing factor of the psychological disorder of PTSD.



## References

- Fragedakis, T. (2014) The Development and Experience of Combat Related PTSD: A Demand for Neuro feedback as an Effective Form of Treatment, *Journal of Counseling and Development*, retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/j.1556-6676.2014.00174.x/abstract>
- Kehle-Forbes, S. (2014) Acceptability of Prolonged Exposure Therapy among U.S. Iraq War Veterans with PTSD Symptomology, *Journal Of Traumatic Stress*, retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25158642>
- Pearrow, M. (2009) The Aftermath of Combat-Related PTSD, *Hammill Institute*, retrieved from <http://www.youngdiggers.com.au/sites/default/files/Aftermath%20of%20combat-related%20PTSD.pdf>
- Peterson, A. L., Luethcke, C. A., Borah, E. V., Borah, A. M., & Young-McCaughan, S. (2011) Assessment and treatment of combat-related PTSD in returning war veterans, *Journal of clinical psychology in medical settings*, retrieved from <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10880-011-9238-3#page-1>
- Schumm, J.M. (2013) Cognitive-Behavioral Conjoint Therapy for PTSD: Initial Findings for Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom Male Combat Veterans and Their Partners, *American Journal of Family Therapy*, retrieved from <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01926187.2012.701592#.VF2bKDSUcVA>
- Sloan, D.P. (2013) Written Exposure Therapy for Veterans with PTSD: A Pilot Study. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24203914>