# **POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENTS**

Prepared for:

The Minister of Health

Prepared by:

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(Date )

# Letter

* Major findings- conclusion or recommendation
* Supplying necessary transmittal info
* Acknowledge who helped you?
* Conversational style
* Free of technical jargon
* Intro + conclusion : 3-5 lines each

# Table of Content

# List of Illustrations

# Executive summary

Overview of report

Free of technical terms

One page

Only major points,

Avoid referencing the body

As paragraphs, not as lists

What do readers need to know??

Most important conclusions and recommendations for decision makers

# Introduction

Prepare non/technical readers for upcoming discussion

Give Info on:

Purpose

Scope

Format

Project description

The formatting :

1. Main purpose
2. Sentence that mentions the introduction subdivisions to follow
3. Project description: set of problems that prompted report
4. Scope info: precise objective of the study +list or description (info ) that parallels order of report’s body(must be accurate )
5. Report format : If in the scope the info is not organized how it is in the body, then we mention the upcoming main sections. As a condensed table of content .

# What is Trauma?

Trauma is an emotional response to a distressing event or experience. It includes experiences that are physically or psychologically significant. Trauma doesn’t have to be the same level as war or sexual assault. Events are considered subjective, and everyone reacts to them differently based on their past experiences. The concept of trauma is generally applied to situations that happen in our lives. The same event could happen to two people, and it affects one of them deeply but doesn’t affect the other. It all depends on past experiences and perception. For instance, some people might go on normally after a hurricane hits, but other people who have experienced losses before, due to a hurricane, will get triggered when a hurricane hits because of their past experiences. Another type of trauma is complex trauma. Which often manifests repetitively. In a specific setting or a period of time. Such as abuse and neglect. It can cause significant harm to the individual. Looking at how a person reacts to a traumatic event and the duration of the symptoms, is a way to identify the type of condition (a condition caused by trauma) they might have developed. Some examples of conditions caused by trauma are:

## Acute Stress Disorder

The disorder develops right after the trauma. And the symptoms last for a short period of time. If the symptoms persist for more than a month, then it is considered PTSD. The symptoms are, flashbacks, intrusive thoughts, anxiety and many more.

## Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTSD is a condition that appears after a person has been subjected to an intense trauma. To say that someone might have PTSD, the symptoms should last for more than a month. It can trigger persistent nightmares and thoughts about the incident.

# What are the symptoms of PTSD?

To diagnose someone with post traumatic stress disorder, they must have the following disturbances/symptoms according to DSM (The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders book is used by mental health care professionals worldwide, as a guide for diagnoses). The following disturbances/symptoms apply to people 6 years old and older :

1-Being exposed to threatening experiences of near-death, sexual violence, or injury. Exposure could be one of the following:

a-First-hand experience.

b-Witnessing the event as a second person. While it happens to others.

c-Occurred to someone you know. Violence, near or actual death.

d-Repeated exposure to violent details. For example, first responders, like police officers with domestic or sexual abuse cases. (Exposure through screens or technology doesn’t count.)

2-Avoidance of anything that is a reminder of the traumatic event. Could either be, avoidance of internal reminders such as thoughts of the event. Or avoidance of any external reminder such as, places, things, and people.

3-One of the following intrusive thoughts:

a-Intrusive thoughts and memories of the traumatic event.

b-Nightmares of the traumatic event.

c-Flashbacks, as if the event is happening again. It may accompany a complete loss of sense of reality.

4-Negative feelings and thoughts (two or more of the following):

a-Negative feelings. Such as, feeling guilty or angry that the event occurred.

b-Not being able to feel good emotions. Such as happiness and contentment.

c-Feeling detached and unrelated to others.

d-Distorted thoughts of the cause of the traumatic event. Which leads to blaming oneself.

e-Exaggerated and illogical beliefs and thoughts. Such as, “I’m forever ruined”,” everyone is bad”.

f-Disassociating from the traumatic event, forgetting a significant detail of the event.

g-The inability of enjoying activities that one used to enjoy.

5-A noticeable change in the way one behaves and reacts. Such as:

a-Angry outbursts

b-Hyper-vigilance

c-Sleep problems

d-Jumpiness

e-Being self-destructive

f-Trouble concentrating

*Note: The previous disturbances from 2 to 4 should be occurring for more than a month*.

6-The disturbances are not caused by physiological effects of substance.

7-The disturbances interfere with one’s day to day life..

# Why is PTSD hard to diagnose?

‏ One of the reasons why PTSD is hard to diagnose is because its symptoms are similar to symptoms of other disorders. For example:

Acute stress disorder: is the development of dissociation, severe anxiety, and detachment that occurs within a month of a traumatic event. A lot of symptoms of acute stress disorder are similar to symptoms of PTSD. But the difference is the duration of PTSD symptoms, they occur for more than a month.

Disassociation disorder: is a response to trauma that makes a person disconnect their mind from their body as a way of protection. Examples of dissociation disorders are depersonalization and derealization. One of PTSD symptoms is feeling detached from others which is similar to disassociation disorders.

Generalized anxiety disorder: in both conditions, generalized anxiety disorder and PTSD, people experience intense anxiety and feel on edge. But the difference with people with PTSD is that they experience anxiety as a response to a traumatic event. Whereas with generalized anxiety disorder, they get anxiety from variety of causes and situations.

Depression: depression and PTSD have some symptoms in common, like feeling shame and guilt. The difference with people who suffer from PTSD is, the shame is related to the trauma.

Panic disorder: someone who suffers from panic disorder may avoid a situation or a place that triggers them. That also happens with people with PTSD, they try to avoid triggers of their trauma.

# How is PTSD treated?

Although traumatic events can be difficult to accept, facing thoughts and receiving professional support are often the only ways to properly heal PTSD. PTSD can be successfully treated, even after many years after the traumatic incident or event, indicating that it's never too late to get help. A complete diagnosis of the patient's symptoms will be performed before receiving PTSD treatment to ensure that treatment is personalized to their specific needs. Psychological therapies and medications, both short- and long-term, can be quite effective. The two types of treatment are frequently more effective when used together.

## Therapy

The goal of therapy is to alter the negative thought patterns that are interfering with an individual's life. This issue is addressed by talking about the traumatic event or focusing on the source of anxieties. The therapy aims for these goals:

* Improve and ease symptoms
* Restore and improve self-esteem
* Learn the tools to manage PTSD symptoms

There are three common types of therapies including, cognitive behavioral therapy, eye

movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR), and exposure therapy.

Cognitive-behavioral therapy:Initially, the patient will talk to the therapist about their traumatic event and how it influenced their lives. This kind of talk therapy assists the patient in identifying their ways of thinking. Then writing about the event in detail will follow. This process aids in how to think about the trauma and how to cope with any distress. It might take 5 to 20 sessions, ranging from 30 to 90 minutes to finish this course of treatment. CBT goal is to treat different mental health disorders, including PTSD, bipolar disorder, panic disorder, eating disorder, and many more.

Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR):is a form of interactive therapy for the treatment of psychological stress. In this type of therapy, the patient will go through their triggering experiences in short doses. While the therapist directs the eye movements by hand movement or using a flashlight. This type of therapy is highly effective, because reliving painful events is frequently less emotionally distressing when their attention is redirected. This course could be used for patients who find it difficult to talk about their experiences. EMDR therapy can be used to treat depression, anxiety, eating disorder, and addiction.

Exposure therapy: this psychotherapy assists individuals in safely confronting both terrifying circumstances and memories so that they cope with them. The goal of this treatment is to expose the patient to a source of anxiety without causing harm or risk. This way they will overcome distress and anxiety. For flashbacks and nightmares, exposure treatment might be incredibly useful.

## Medication

Because the balance of chemicals called neurotransmitters is out of balance in the brains of people with PTSD, they experience "threats" differently. They have an easily activated "fight or flight" response, which causes them to feel nervous and uneasy. Trying to shut that down all the time can leave one feeling emotionally cold and distant. Medications aid the patient in stopping thinking about what occurred. They can also assist one in having a more positive attitude in life. Paroxetine and Sertraline are the only drugs that has been licensed by the FDA to treat PTSD. And because people respond to medications differently and no one's PTSD is the same, doctors may prescribe meds that are not on the label. (This indicates that the pharmaceutical scientists did not request the FDA to approve the medicine is beneficial for PTSD.) These may include the following:

Antidepressants

Beta-blockers

Monoamine oxidase inhibitors

Benzodiazepines

# What are the effects of untreated trauma?

Experts say that experiencing traumatic events such as, war, abuse, crime, can lead to several health conditions, including stroke, diabetes, obesity. If left untreated, the impact of trauma on a person's life could leave an impact that would be harder to treat. These effects include:

## Behavioral Effects

People who are dealing with traumatic events may engage in some certain unhealthy behaviors as an escape route. These unhealthy behaviors could be smoking, drug use, overeating, or alcohol drinking, to find relief. Most traumatized people hesitate to seek help from professionals, so instead they use these behaviors as coping mechanisms. In this case, if the individual still hasn’t coped in a healthy way and used these unhealthy behaviors as coping mechanisms. The individual will eventually develop addictions, and serious rehabilitation will be necessary.

## Physical Effects

The physical effects of untreated trauma are more than just unhealthy habits. When you are under stress, your body experiences direct biological changes. Being in a situation that triggers anxiety, the body will respond in several ways. Sometimes, your heart starts racing, or your adrenaline levels rise. A traumatized person experiences stronger anxiety symptoms than a person who hasn’t been exposed to such events. The inducing of anxiety, and the symptoms that come with it, will cause the body to tear and wear, and it becomes weaker with extended exposure. Untreated trauma leaves you with lasting stress, that in return, causes swelling in the body. People who have experienced trauma are three times more likely to suffer from irritable bowel syndrome. The executive director of the National Center for Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, found a correlation between trauma and type 2 diabetes. It is impossible to be completely sure that the trauma is the cause for some medical issues. Because a lot of factors come in play when it comes to medical issues, like age, environment, lifestyle ,genetics and more.

## Psychological Effects

Traumatized people, suffering from PTSD, might experience the following psychological effects:

* Isolation
* Hyper-vigilance
* Suicidal thoughts
* Panic attacks, anxiety, phobias, depression
* Hallucinations
* Nightmares and disturbed sleep
* Anger and sudden irritation
* Insomnia

## Effects of Untreated Trauma on Family

When someone is suffering from PTSD, it reflects on all aspects of the person’s life. In some cases, traumatized people have no control over their emotions or their actions, and that affects the people around them. Especially their family members, who are affected by their sudden mood swings and extreme responses. Even friends and pass piers might get affected by such actions. Untreated trauma puts the lives of the individual and the people around them in danger.

# How Long does PTSD last?

PTSD could last for a long time, it might even last for the remainder of the person’s life. It depends on how severe the case is and what the individual is doing to help heal.

# Who is most likely to suffer with PTSD?

Worldwide, the cases concerning PTSD have had a dramatic increase over the past years. PTSD has caused major impacts on many individuals’ lives. Further, the relationship between violence and PTSD is a positive relation (Dinan, McCall & Gibson, 2004). The rate of violence has rapidly increased and with-it PTSD cases increased in number. This anxiety disorder approximately affects 20% of people who were a victim or a witness to a traumatic event. However, not everyone who was exposed to such events have developed PTSD.

Here are some professions or age groups that are more likely to suffer from PTSD:

## Doctors

Doctors are at a high risk of developing PTSD, on account of the nature of the job. Doctors who work in military forces and emergency rooms are more likely to develop this disorder. They work to try to aid severely injured children and adults and sometimes, they do not survive. Which in some cases, affects the doctors deeply, by what they witnessed and experienced, to the point where they cannot stop feeling the shock, anger, and sorrow. That’s why it’s important to have a designated mental health care professional, to help doctors process these emotions and proceed normally with their lives and to do their jobs well.

## Children

In a lot of cases, the psychological problems in children are caused by their parents or caretakers. Depression in children is considered the first sign that they might develop PTSD if the condition is untreated. The parents’ or caretakers’ abuse, neglect, and tension strongly affects the child’s behavior and mental health. It is also believed that most PTSD cases are rooted in the childhood and prior untreated trauma (Groves, 2015).

## Firefighters

In a study done in Oklahoma City where a massive bombing incident occurred, that led to the loss of a lot of lives. Firefighters were the first responders at rescue and recovery missions. The firefighters who were on duty and witnessed the incident have developed PTSD. The percentage of PTSD increased from 13% to 23% because of the event (Oklahoma USA; 1995).

## Police officers

Police officers form cumulative PTSD, which happens through repeated exposure of trauma, rather than exposure to one incident. On average, 15% of police officers in the United States suffer with PTSD symptoms.

There was a case of a 28-year-old police officer who was on duty one night. He saw a young man sitting in a bus shelter and had his head between his knees. So naturally, the police officer approached the young man to see if he needed help. In doing that, the young man pointed a gun in the officer’s face. He stood up, held the muzzle of the gun at the officer’s throat and walked him to the nearest wall where he asked him to wait. The officer noticed the man having a full conversation with himself, of whether or not to kill the policeman, for as he was mentally ill. The officer tried to convince him to put the gun away, but he got no response in return. After several attempts, the officer had no choice but to protect himself, so he shot the man which resulted in killing him. This traumatic event caused the police officer to develop PTSD. He struggled with nightmares for six months. Became an alcoholic and suffered from insomnia. Which ruined his relationship with his partner and made him incompetent to do his job.

## Military

Soldiers have the highest PTSD recorded cases. The soldiers’ PTSD is complex, unlike the other cases. That is because of the brutal environment and situations they go through every day. Many soldiers have experienced trauma or have had a mental disorder diagnosis prior to joining the military. In some cases, recruiters lack knowledge of past mental disorders diagnosis that the recruits suffered with and hasn’t healed from. Because this information has been sealed once the recruit turned 18 years old. Therefore, the recruit is put in hazardous and stressful environments. Which eventually triggers them, and could develop into PTSD (Groves, 2015). And in other cases, recruiters know of the recruits past mental disorders diagnoses and still allows them to enlist in the military. When soldiers are retraumatized, their past trauma is triggered. Which causes them to get stuck in the past and not able to do their job in the present. Which is how CPTSD starts to develop (Walker, 2013). CPTSD is complex PTSD that is caused by repeated or ongoing trauma.

# How to cope with PTSD?

Everyone copes in a different way. Here are some healthy ways to cope with PTSD:

Deep breathing

Deep breathing helps the individual calm their nervous system and keeps them grounded when their anxiety strikes.

Journaling

Keeping a journal to keep track of the emotions that have risen throughout the day, is helpful. When writing down thoughts and emotions, it helps with making them bearable and manageable. Journaling helps with noticing patterns of triggers triggered. So that next time, the individual is aware of what triggers them.

Support group

Joining a support group and being surrounded by people who have gone through similar experiences when it comes to trauma, is extremely helpful. Each member of the support group can talk about what has helped them in their healing journey. And the individual will feel less alone.

## Distraction

When strong emotions and anxiety rise. Getting distracted temporarily is a good way to not be overwhelmed and burnt out. Distraction could be, doing a hobby, watching a show or going out.

## Grounding Techniques

One grounding technique when experiencing an anxiety attack, is using the five senses. The individual focuses on five things they see, four things they can touch, three things they hear, two things they smell and one thing they taste. This technique keeps the individual present.

# Figures

# Conclusion and recommendation

* Description maybe as lists of conclusion +recommendations
* Conclusion: convictions +:beliefs from the findings
* Recommendations: suggest actions based on conclusion
* We can mention points not in the report
* For technical +management readers
* Expanded version of executive summary

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# Appendix