

IMPACT OF CHRONIC POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF THE SURVIVORS

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Summary

Background: Research data from studies of functional neuroanatomy and neurochemistry indicate various dysfunctions in certain areas of the brain in individuals who are suffering from chronic Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. These abnormalities are involved in the evolution of symptoms of PTSD, deterioration of cognitive functions and decreased quality of life of the survivors. Intensity of these symptoms is in direct correlation with the degree of dysfunction in the central nervous system. Results of one Israeli study of civilian survivors show the presence of PTSD symptoms in the majority of subjects shortly after exposure to traumatic events; while 39 percent of the subjects still experience symptoms one month after the trauma; 17 percent had symptoms after four months, and only 10 percent of the survivors were still symptomatic one year after the trauma. It is also well known nowadays that SSRI (Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors) antidepressants lead to the improvement of CNS dysfunctions in PTSD.

Methods: In our research the main focus was to evaluate individual perception of the quality of life in subjects suffering from chronic PTSD. Research subjects were 100 adult patients who were treated for chronic PTSD in the Department of Psychiatry of the University Clinical Center of Sarajevo. Their treatment involved psychopharmacological and psychotherapeutic treatment. Quality of life was assessed with the Manchester Quality of Life Scale (MANSA), a self-report scale. The subjects were assessed prior to treatment, and in three and six months follow-up.

Results: The results of our study indicate that subjects who are suffering from chronic PTSD have a lower subjective perception of the quality of life. Combined psychopharmacological and psychotherapeutic treatment in the duration of six months leads to insignificant improvement in the perception of QOL, this perhaps indicating the need for longer treatment of individuals suffering from chronic PTSD.

Key words: chronic PTSD, Quality of Life