

Does the diagnosis of cancer cause post-traumatic stress disorder in women?

Written by Australian Business

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A paper published in the current issue of psychotherapy and psychosomatics provides data concerned with the appropriateness of a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder in women with a diagnosis of cancer.

Previous research has shown considerable variation in the proportion of patients who develop posttraumatic stress symptoms resulting in a PTSD among cancer patients .

The clinical importance of PTSD symptomatology for gynecological and breast cancer patients is still unclear. In this study Authors assessed the prevalence of posttraumatic stress responses in female patients after completion of cancer treatment.

Patients were screened for cancer-related PTSD symptoms using the Impact of Event Scale (IES-R). A sample of 506 women (58.5% breast cancer, 41.5% gynecological cancer) aged 23-87 years (mean 59) was screened. The majority of breast cancer patients (89.5%) had early stage disease (T1 and T2). About two-thirds were within the first 5 years after diagnosis. On the screening scales, 60 patients (11.9%) scored above the cutoff value indicating a high level of distress.

The SCID revealed that only 30 patients (5.9%) met the diagnostic criteria for a PTSD according to the DSM-IV classification. The results of the stepwise logistic regression analysis showed that PTSD is weakly associated with sociodemographic and medical variables.

Cancer patients experience high levels of stress symptoms during their disease trajectory.

However, caution is warranted using a PTSD diagnosis in cancer populations. In this study only 5.9% of participants met the diagnostic criteria for PTSD. Cancer is a traumatic event, but it is not inducing higher rates of PTSD. The prevalence of PTSD was even lower than the estimated prevalence of PTSD in the general population with about 10% in the USA and below 10% in

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