

Introduction

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that's triggered by a terrifying event, either experiencing it or witnessing it. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares and severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event.

70% of adults in the U.S. have experienced some type of traumatic event at least once in their lives. This equates to approximately 223.4 million people.(fig 1)

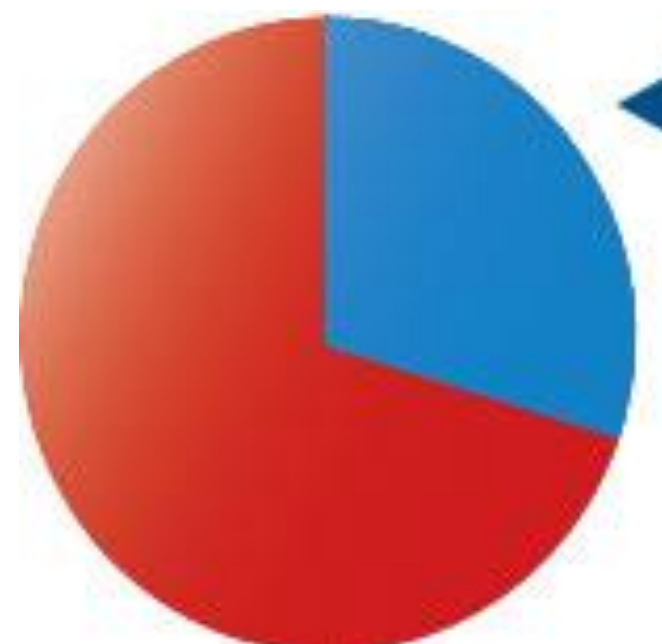


Figure 1

An estimated 8% of Americans – 24.4 million people – have PTSD at any given time. That is equal to the total population of Texas (fig 2).



Figure 2

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

This type of talk therapy helps you recognize the ways of thinking (cognitive patterns) that are keeping you stuck for example, negative beliefs about yourself and the risk of traumatic things happening again.

According to the VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guidelines for 2017, the best first-line treatment for PTSD is cognitive therapy. Based on research, it has been found to be most effective in treating symptoms of the disorder. Specific types of therapy, such as Prolonged Exposure and Cognitive Processing Therapy, have been shown to have the most success.

Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR)

This type of therapy combines exposure therapy with a series of guided eye movements that help you process traumatic memories and change how you react to them.

The eye movement component of the therapy may not be critical for benefit ,however one study found that people treated with eye movement therapy had greater improvement in their symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder than people given therapy without eye movements. (2)

Medication

Antidepressants such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) have some benefit for PTSD symptoms. A systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials was undertaken; 51 studies were included.

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors were found small statistically significant evidence of efficacy for fluoxetine, paroxetine and venlafaxine. Thus, these medications are considered to be first-line medications for PTSD.(3)

Conclusion

Traumatic events can be very difficult to overcome, but confronting your feelings and seeking professional help is often the only way of effectively treating PTSD. It's possible for PTSD to be successfully treated many years after the traumatic event occurred, which means it's never too late to seek help.

References

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