

FC01-05

THE ASSOCIATION OF TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES AND POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER WITH PHYSICAL MORBIDITY IN OLD AGE - A GERMAN POPULATION BASED STUDY

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**Objective:** To examine the relationship of traumatic experiences and PTSD among a representative population sample of 1,456 German elderly (60 years and above). Several studies have suggested that PTSD, but also traumatic experiences are related to adverse health outcomes. However, many past studies are based on selected samples like combat veterans, or survivors of natural disasters. To our knowledge this is the first representative population study in the elderly.

**Methods:** Based on self-report data and using regression analyses, we investigated the association of traumatic experiences and PTSD with several medical conditions.

**Results:** Traumatized subjects had a significantly increased risk for all the medical conditions under study compared to those participants without a traumatic exposure (OR = 1.37 for hypertension up to 5.12 (CI =2.25-11.6) for cancer). There are significant associations of current PTSD with cardiovascular diseases (Angina pectoris/coronary artery disease; congestive heart failure, peripheral vascular disease) and cardiovascular risk factors (hypertension, elevated cholesterol) (OR = 1.94 for peripheral vascular disease up to 3.76 for elevated cholesterol), as well as with asthma, cancer, back pain, hard of hearing, osteoporosis, stomach problems and thyroid disorders.

**Conclusions:** Our study delivers additional evidence for the association of traumatic stress and PTSD with impaired physical health in a general population sample in the German elderly. It underpins the importance of traumatic experiences and PTSD not only for mental health, but also for physical health as a long-term consequence.