

COGNITIVE DECLINE AND SOMATIC COMPLAINTS IN WAR VETERANS AND FORMER YOUNG PRISONERS OF NAZI CONCENTRATION CAMPS

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Background: Many studies suggest that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in some children after severe stress may become a chronic mental illness. According to Peters J.J. (2006), PTSD is associated with the acceleration of age-related memory decline. At the same time, this disorder is characterized by dissociative reliving of the trauma. Guez J. (2011) proved that traumatic stress is linked to a deficit in associative episodic memory. Although PTSD is associated with chronic pain, while there is evidence for reduced pain sensitivity in this disorder.

The aim of our study was to compare the level of cognitive impairment, as well as the intensity and frequency of disturbing physical symptoms (pain), and the incidence of cerebrovascular diseases (arterial hypertension, myocardial infarction, stroke) in two groups of patients: the first one - former war participants, and the second one - former young prisoners of Nazi concentration camps.

All patients have suffered severe stress associated with war in the past. We had evaluated the patients' complaints, and studied their medical history, emotional state, cognitive functions and coping strategies.

Results: Our patients from second group more often had high blood pressure somatic complaints proved to be significantly more frequent in this group, demonstrating reduced tolerance to pain in former prisoners. They also had the tendency to depressive reactions and poor performance on cognitive tests.

However, in patients with PTSD verbal memory was better than without PTSD in both groups.