

QUALITY OF LIFE OF VETERANS WITH POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS SYMPTOMS

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Introduction: the presence of residual post-traumatic symptoms is the norm rather than the exception among Veterans with past or present post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), even during or after an efficacious treatment. Moreover, decrease in PTSD symptoms does not warrant a direct and equivalent increase in quality of life. There is considerable variability in indices of quality of life among individuals with PTSD, suggesting important individual differences. The objective of this study is to examine the relationship between post-traumatic symptom severity and quality of life among Veterans consulting an operational stress injury (OSI) clinic.

Methodology: eighty-six (86) veterans consulting an OSI clinic have completed validated self-report questionnaires targeting PTSD symptom severity, quality of life, depression symptoms, alcohol use, quality and pain severity.

Results: there is a strong negative association between post-traumatic symptoms and quality of life. However, this association is no longer significant when depressive symptoms are accounted for (complete mediation). Pain and sleep also affect this association, but to a lesser extent (partial mediation). Alcohol use showed no significant impact on the relationship between post-traumatic symptoms and quality of life.

Conclusion: although PTSD symptom severity has an important impact on quality of life, depression, sleep and pain considerably affect this relationship. One way to improve the efficacy of empirically-based treatments for PTSD in military and Veterans populations may be to specifically address these issues in therapy. One important implication is the demonstration that Veterans may aspire to acceptable levels of quality of life and daily functioning despite the presence of persistent post-traumatic symptoms.