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Post-Traumatic Sleep Disorders

Obstructive sleep apnea insomnia TBI and PTSD



Although one may understand the prevalence of horrifying dreams in our returning soldiers, the specific sleep disorders falling upon them seem to be unique to their own combat experience.

A recent study shows that the specific traumatic experience a soldier faces causes the variety of sleep disorder he or she is fated for if that soldier has post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or traumatic brain injury (TBI). Our nation's defenders find themselves overwhelmed by insomnia and sleep apnea, occurring in regards to their trigger.

If you have trouble sleeping, speak with a therapist.

Published in the journal *Chest*, this study oversaw 261 patients with either PTSD, TBI, or both. Even though the initial study was created to determine the prevalence of sleep disorders in these patients, in order to find specific correlations with these increased sleep disorder rates, clinical variables were incorporated and assessed.

The findings were as such:

- 71% showed sleep fragmentation (inability to sleep through the night)
- 87% showed hypersomnia (excessive sleepiness, usually during the day)

Further diagnostic sleep studies were performed on around 80% of patients:

- 56% diagnosed with obstructive sleep apnea (OSA)
- 49% diagnosed with insomnia

Now particularly interesting in regards to physical injury, those with blunt trauma had twice as much OSA while those with blast injuries experienced almost 25% more insomnia cases.

The study authors, doctors from the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC, warn that, "an increased awareness of the high prevalence of sleep disorders in combat veterans is critical given the chronicity of these disorders, and extension beyond the military healthcare system."

The effects of these diseases are serious. While TBI occurs with a blow to the head disrupting the brain's function, PTSD typically begins after a life-threatening experience and does not require physical injury to the victim. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, PTSD is an anxiety disorder where sufferers typically feel "on edge," hold intense worry and guilt,

and experience flashbacks or reoccurring nightmares. PTSD patients tend to become reclusive and are prone to temperamental outbursts.

Families should encourage treatment and raise awareness in regards to the increasing prevalence of sleep disorders among our nation's heroes.

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