

Post-traumatic stress disorder in survivors of a blast

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Abstract

Statement of the Problem: On March 15, 2008, a series of massive and deadly explosions ripped through an Albanian government munitions depot in the village of Gërdec near Tirana, resulting in 24 deaths, injuries to over 300 more people, and catastrophic damage to hundreds of homes and other civilian structures within a 2.5 kilometer radius. Thousands of artillery shells, most of them un-exploded, littered the area. The blast shattered all the windows of the terminal building at the country's only international airport, and all flights were suspended for some 40 minutes. Some 4,000 inhabitants of the zone were evacuated and offered shelter in state-owned resorts. The Government declared the zone a disaster area. The aim of the study was to assess the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among the survivors in the population of Gërdec village.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: A cross-sectional study with the following collected data was conducted: (1) Demographics: sex; mean age; age range; mean time since injury; The DSM-5 criteria for PTSD were adopted, the PTSD checklist–civilian version was used to aid in the diagnosis and a higher cut-off score was implemented to minimize false positives; and (2) PTSD-related variables.

Findings: The prevalence of PTSD was 61 (37.4%). The rate of PTSD was higher among females (47.8%) than males, (29.8%) ($p < 0.01$). The most common symptomatic responses that persisted in the long run were: (1) feeling very upset when something reminded of the stressful experience (51.5%); (2) loss of interest in things that were previously enjoyable (43.6%); and (3) feeling distant or cut-off from other people (33.1%).

Conclusion & Significance: The present paper is an attempt to stress the importance of psychological aspects of these incidents. More research is needed to study the interaction between trauma exposure, pre-existing psychological and biological vulnerabilities, and the post-trauma environment.

Biography

Ariana Reli is a Board-Certified Psychiatrist with a certificate of additional qualifications in Addiction Psychiatry. She is a dedicated community psychiatrist with extensive experience in public and private inpatient and outpatient settings, and an experienced Psychiatric Administrator who continues active clinical practice with seriously mentally ill and dually diagnosed patients. She also consults on topics in general administrative psychiatry, including quality improvement, treatment planning, and physician management, and in clinical psychiatry, including recovery-oriented treatment for individuals with serious mental illness; training clinicians in attitudes, values, knowledge, and skills for treating individuals with serious mental illness; and family/consumer/provider collaboration.

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