

The threat to life and health caused by chronic medical illness can contribute to traumatic reactions. Chronic and life-threatening illnesses are associated with negative mental health outcomes and were added to DSM-IV as one of the stressful events leading to the onset of PTSD.

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Aims: To determine the prevalence of PTSD and the risk factors for PTSD symptomology in individuals with a history of chronic medical illness.

Method: 138 adults with a history of chronic illness were recruited via a research recruiting website, social media platforms and patient support groups. Participants completed a PTSD self-report measure and perceived social support scale, and provided demographic information. Descriptive statistics, correlation and regression analysis were conducted.

Result: PTSD is highly prevalent among individuals diagnosed with a chronic illness; 40.6% participants scored above the cut-off on the PCL scale (≥ 33), indicating high likelihood of PTSD. Predictors of PTSD severity included young age at diagnosis, history of traumatic loss of a civil relationship, and specific medical and surgical procedure such as diagnosis, surgery and non-surgical treatment procedure. The availability of adequate social support, adequate quality of professional support and the absence of mental health condition pre-diagnosis with chronic illness were associated with low PTSD symptoms.

Conclusions: The findings are consistent with existing literature, supporting the assertion that PTSD can be associated with many chronic illnesses

Biography

Haifa Bin Haamed is a PhD researcher at University of Sheffield, UK.