

COVID-19 related post-traumatic stress disorder in adults with lived experience of psychiatric disorder

Catrin Lewis, Katie Lewis, Alice Roberts, Claudia Evison, Bethan Edwards, Ann John, Keith Lloyd, Holly Pearce, Rob Poole, Natalie Richards, Catherine Robinson, Ian Jones, Jonathan I. Bisson

Introduction

Prevalence estimates of COVID-19 related post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have ranged from 1% to over 60% in the general population. People with lived experience of psychiatric disorder may be particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 related PTSD but this has received inadequate attention.

The aim was to investigate COVID-19 related PTSD within a sample of participants with lived experience of a psychiatric disorder, to (1) determine whether self-reported COVID-19 related events were PTSD qualifying; (2) estimate the prevalence of probable ICD-11 COVID-19 related PTSD anchored to these events; and (3) determine key factors associated with COVID-19 related traumatic stress symptoms.

Method

Data source: A longitudinal study of mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic by the National Centre for Mental Health (NCMH; www.ncmh.info).

Sample: 1571 participants who completed a survey on COVID-19 related trauma in November 2020.

Outcome measures: PTSD (International Trauma Questionnaire; ITQ), depression (Patient Health Questionnaire - 9; PHQ-9), anxiety (Generalised Anxiety Disorder - 7; GAD-7).

Statistical analysis: Sample characteristics were examined using descriptive statistics. The association between key factors (age; gender; income; worry about finances; perceived social support; key worker status; symptoms of anxiety and depression at baseline; and lived experience of PTSD /complex PTSD (CPTSD)) and traumatic stress symptoms were investigated by linear regression with total score on the ITQ as the dependent variable. Analyses were adjusted for potential confounders (age, gender, and income). The Holm method was used to adjust p values to account for multiple testing

Results

Participants

1571 adults with lived experience of psychiatric disorder

Sample Characteristics

Mean age: 47.1 years (SD) = 12.72

Ethnicity: 95.4% white

Gender identity: 76.0% female

COVID-19 related trauma exposure and PTSD

40.1% perceived the pandemic as traumatic

5.3% reported an ICD-11 PTSD qualifying trauma

0.8% met criteria for probable ICD-11 COVID-19 related PTSD

Most common COVID-19 related traumatic stressors

40.1% generalised worry about the pandemic

21.1% lockdown and social distancing



Associations between ITQ scores and key factors

After adjustment for potential confounders and multiple testing, higher ITQ scores were associated with younger age, lower income, lower social support, financial worries, and lived experience of PTSD/CPTSD. Higher levels of depression and anxiety symptoms approximately four months previously predicted higher ITQ scores.

After adjustment, there was no evidence that ITQ scores were associated with gender, key worker status or being at risk of severe infection due to a physical health condition

Conclusion

We did not find evidence of widespread COVID-19 related PTSD among individuals with lived experience of psychiatric disorder. There is a need for future research to derive valid prevalence estimates of COVID-19 related PTSD.

Contact

Dr. Catrin Lewis
Division of Psychological Medicine
and Clinical Neurosciences
Cardiff University, Wales, UK
LewisCE7@cf.ac.uk