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'THE BODY KEEPS THE SCORE' REVISITED: CHANGES IN LIPID LEVELS AND CORONARY DISEASE RISK IN ARMY VETERANS SUFFERING FROM CHRONIC PTSD

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Aim: To assess possible differences in plasma cholesterol, triglycerides, LDL-C, HDL-C, VLDL-C, Index of arteriosclerosis and Established risk factor for arteriosclerosis and 10 year risk of coronary disease between veterans with combat experience with PTSD and veterans with combat experience without PTSD. To compare and analyze differences between groups in socio-demographic characteristics, trauma exposure, coping strategies and quality of life.

Method: Plasma lipid parameters were determined and risk factors calculated for 50 subjects in the PTSD group and 50 subjects in the non-PTSD group. Groups were homogenized in gender, age, BMI, smoking status and somatic or psychiatric co-morbid disorders or the use of medications influencing blood lipid levels. Trauma exposure, coping strategies and quality of life were assessed with referenced psychometric instruments, socio-demographic characteristics with use of questionnaire.

Results: Subjects in the PTSD group had significantly higher levels of all plasma lipid parameters except for HDL-C that was significantly lower. Risk factors were significantly higher in PTSD group. There was no significant difference in indices of exposure to combat trauma. Secondary traumatization was significantly more frequent in PTSD group. There were significant differences in socio-economic parameters, quality of life assessment and repertoire of coping strategies.

Conclusions: The results of this study provide further evidence for the connection of chronic PTSD and blood lipids abnormalities and cardiovascular risk factors. The results indicate the importance of posttraumatic environment factors and coping strategies for the occurrence and persistence of PTSD.

Key words: chronic PTSD, arteriosclerosis, serum lipids, cardiovascular risks, veterans, Bosnia and Herzegovina