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Research

Post-traumatic stress disorder, commonly referred to as PTSD is a mental health condition caused by either witnessing or experiencing a traumatic event. The symptoms of PTSD are intrusive memories, avoidance, negative thoughts & mood, and changes both physical and emotional reactions (Mayo Clinic). The intrusive memories include recurrent distressing memories of the event, reliving the moment through flashbacks, nightmares of the incident(s), etc. Avoidance is essentially trying not to think or speak about the trauma and staying away from things that could remind them of what happened. Negative thoughts and mood cause the person to feel hopelessness, think negatively about themselves and other people, strained relationships, memory issues, and find it difficult to feel positively or at all. They can also develop disruptions in their normal lives such as aggressive behavior, angry outbursts, paranoia, etc (Mayo Clinic). Common reasons for developing this condition include being in a car accident, sexual assault, abuse, a traumatic injury, or warfare. Treatment for PTSD includes psychotherapy and medication depending on the severity of the symptoms. The types of therapies that can be used are cognitive therapy, exposure therapy, and eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR). Therapists try to teach some skills that can help those who are suffering handle stressful situations. Typical medication consists of antidepressants, anxiety drugs, and a drug called Prazosin that is supposed to help reduce nightmares.

Many years ago, PTSD was not recognized as it is today. In the early twentieth century, those who returned home from the first world war exhibiting symptoms of PTSD were said to be dealing with 'shell-shock'. It was thought that the loud noise from the blasts in warfare was causing veterans to behave abnormally. This theory was discarded when it was found that veterans who did not get exposed to loud blasts were also exhibiting symptoms of shell-shock (McDonald et al.). It was then concluded that it was a form of 'hysteria', a condition women were thought to suffer from. Those who returned home with PTSD were seen as weak. An article outlining the history of combat-related PTSD explains "Treatment methods were based on the idea that the soldier who had entered into war as a hero was now behaving as a coward and needed to be snapped out of it" (McDonald et al.). Veterans were not treated properly due to their lack of knowledge about PTSD and from their ignorant views on masculinity. This disregard and improper treatment likely worsened the problem. In the late twentieth century up to the twentieth century, PTSD started to become recognized as a legitimate illness and was taken more seriously.

War veterans are not the only victims of post-combat PTSD. The families of veterans must devote a lot of care and patience to their loved one who is suffering. Wives of combat veterans report having to spend a lot of time accommodating for their loved one. They have to change their lifestyle to ensure the least amount of stress as possible. In an article with written accounts of wives caring for their veteran husbands with PTSD, it was revealed how difficult it is to provide support to their spouse. The article states, "These partners expressed the enduring need to exert extreme efforts not to offend the veteran; exceptional caution, sensitivity, and self-control in order to avoid conflict; and the need to amend their own behaviours, interactions, and communication style to attenuate or offset the veteran's triggers." This demonstrates how it is a tedious effort for wives to avoid triggering their spouse. They have to be cautious because they are dealing with a

person in a fragile state. They must be considerate in order to comfortably live with them. In some accounts, wives revealed that they are unable to be the mother they need to be for their children because of all the time spent focusing on their husbands' issues. Furthermore, it was also stated that "Some women viewed the extreme self-control and need to amend their behaviour, not just as a means to avoid triggering the veteran, but also as a form of avoiding conflict and physical or verbal aggression." Some wives feel as if they are 'walking on eggshells' trying to avoid conflicts that could potentially end in violence. They are dealing with someone who is sensitive to everything, also prone to reacting strongly and negatively.

Those who suffer from PTSD need to be understood and receive more compassion so they can properly be treated. War veterans have faced stigma in the past for their condition and were misunderstood. They were seen as weak and subjected to treatments that did not help. If left untreated, the condition could worsen and drive someone to commit suicide. PTSD could be a burden of family members trying to take care of their loved one. People with PTSD are in a delicate state and can be triggered easily. With therapy and medication, one can successfully manage their condition and live a normal life.

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