

No association between cumulative traumatic experiences and sex in risk for posttraumatic stress disorder among human immunodeficiency virus-positive adults

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Abstract

This study examined the association between the type and number of traumatic experiences and the conditional risk for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), stratified by sex, in human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). We evaluated 465 (114 male and 350 female) HIV-positive adults attending HIV clinics in Cape Town, South Africa. Demographic and clinical data were collected, and the participants were screened for current PTSD and traumatic event exposure using the Mini-International Neuropsychiatric Interview and the Life Events Checklist, respectively. The highest attributable risk for PTSD was derived from sexual assault (17.4%) and transport accidents (16.9%). Only sexual assault was significantly ($p = 0.002$) associated with current PTSD. Although sex had no effect on the prediction of current PTSD, HIV-infected men tended to experience more lifetime traumas than HIV-infected women, with the men having significantly higher rates of exposure than women to physical assault ($p = 0.018$) and assault with a weapon ($p = 0.001$). These data highlight the importance of considering trauma type in contributing to the burden of PTSD in HIV-infected adults.

Estimates from the World Mental Health Survey suggest that the burden of mental illness such as depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and substance abuse may be substantial in those living with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) (Demyttenaere et al., 2004). Of these, PTSD is one of the most prevalent mental disorders, with rates ranging from 10.4% to 42% in people living with HIV/AIDS (Kelly et al., 1998; Martinez et al., 2002; Pingo and Seedat, 2009; Radcliffe et al., 2007). In developing countries such as South Africa, both PTSD and trauma exposure are common concomitants of HIV/AIDS (Olley et al., 2005).

PTSD may develop secondary to a diagnosis of HIV/AIDS (Olley et al., 2005, 2006) or after other traumas in infected patients, in particular, interpersonal traumas (Martin and Kagee, 2011; Olley et al., 2005, 2006; Radcliffe et al., 2007). In a study undertaken on the prevalence of and factors associated with PTSD in patients with recently diagnosed HIV in South Africa (Cape Town), major depression and PTSD were the most common disorders at both baseline (35% and 15%, respectively) and follow-up (26% and 20%, respectively; Olley et al., 2005, 2006). Female sex was significantly associated with the

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