Co-Occurrence of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder with Positive Psychotic Symptoms in a Nationally Representative Sample

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Objective:

- To determine the association between posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and positive psychotic symptoms in a nationally representative sample.

Methods:

- Data were examined from the National Comorbidity Survey (N=5,877).
- The Composite International Diagnostic Interview (CIDI) was used to make DSM-III-R diagnoses.
- Fifteen separate CIDI questions were utilized to screen for positive psychotic symptoms.
- Because positive psychotic symptoms were significantly associated with a range of sociodemographic variables, and psychiatric and medical comorbidity, multiple logistic regression analysis was used to determine whether lifetime PTSD was independently associated with positive psychotic symptoms.

Results:

- PTSD was associated with an increased likelihood of endorsing one or more psychotic symptoms:
  - Crude odds ratio = 3.55; p<0.001
  - Adjusted odds ratio = 1.83; p<0.001
- The co-occurrence of PTSD with psychotic symptoms was characterized by greater levels of comorbidity with mental disorders, general medical conditions, disability and suicidal behavior.

Table 1. Comorbidity of DSM-III-R mental disorders and general medical conditions for two groups of PTSD (with or without positive psychotic symptoms).[a]

Lifetime Mental Disorders and Past year General Medical Conditions	PTSD without Psychotic symptoms (n=208)	PTSD with Psychotic Symptoms (n=222)
Panic disorder**	6.3%	15.0%
Agoraphobia without panic	12.0%	17.6%
Social phobia**	18.8%	38.0%
Generalized anxiety disorder*	11.1%	19.0%
Simple phobia*	23.6%	35.3%
Major Depression**	38.9%	58.4%
Dysthymia	20.2%	25.9%
Bipolar disorder*	0.4%	3.6%
Alcohol abuse/dependence**	26.4%	40.7%
Drug abuse/dependence**	17.8%	30.3%
Antisocial personality disorder**	3.8%	14.9%
Past year general medical conditions**		
None	52.9%	44.3%
One	32.2%	26.2%
Two or more	14.9%	29.4%

Table 2. Distress, disability and suicidal behavior among the two groups of PTSD (with, or without positive psychotic symptoms).[a]

Characteristics	PTSD without Psychotic symptoms (n=208)	PTSD with Psychotic Symptoms (n=222)
Lifetime suicidal ideation**	34.6%	51.1%
Lifetime suicide attempts**	13.5%	28.6%
Past 30 disability (one or more days vs. none)**	17.4%	30.1%
Past 30 day High distress**	23.0%	51.1%

[a]Chi square analysis was utilized to determine group differences

*p<0.05; **p<0.01.

Conclusions:

- This is the first population-based study to investigate PTSD in relation to endorsement of positive psychotic symptoms, and a strong association was obtained.
- Mechanisms that may explain this co-occurrence need to be further investigated.

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