

7 Things You Should Know About Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Opioid Pain Medications



1. About 25 million people in the U.S. will have PTSD at some point in their lives, and approximately one-third of veterans who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan return with PTSD and/or some form of mild Traumatic Brain Injury (mTBI). Chronic pain frequently accompanies both conditions. But the conditions themselves may go undiagnosed.
2. Effective treatment of PTSD can dramatically improve patients' lives. But failure to treat or improper treatment with opioid pain medicines can make some aspects of PTSD (e.g., avoidance) worse.
3. PTSD and TBI often co-occur and amplify overlapping symptoms. PTSD is strongly associated with opioid use and abuse; TBI may also be a risk factor for abuse.
4. Returning veterans with pain and PTSD are three times more likely to receive opioids compared to those without any mental health disorders. They are also more likely to be prescribed higher doses and dangerous drug combinations.
5. Treating chronic pain with long-term opioids may slow recovery in people with PTSD and TBI.
6. Psychotherapy is the first-choice treatment for PTSD, although the right pharmacotherapy can help. PTSD and chronic pain tend to improve together.
7. Providers who know what to look for and understand the treatment options for PTSD and mTBI can reduce risk and help patients turn their lives around.

Did you check for PTSD before prescribing ER/LA opioids?

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