Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
A Guide For Patients/Families

This brochure provides information about post-traumatic stress disorder, its causes, symptoms, diagnosis and treatment options. It is designed to respond to the questions most frequently asked by patients and their families.

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What is Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?

PTSD is the reaction to a major stressful event. The event may be a natural disaster, such as a flood, earthquake etc, or be more personal such as a road traffic accident, fire, murder, rape etc. The reaction may be immediate or delayed, but it lasts a long time and prevents you from getting on with the rest of your life.

What Are The Signs And Symptoms Of PTSD?

The patient's history includes exposure to a traumatic event that threatened life and their response was intense fear, helplessness or horror.

Signs and Symptoms Can Be Divided Into Three Categories:

Hyperarousal:

- Onset approximately 4 weeks after the event. Duration: two days to four weeks,

- Persistent anxiety;

- Irritability;

- Anger;

- Difficulty in sleeping or/and insomnia;

- Difficulty in concentrating;

- Overreaction to stimuli.

Intrusion:

- Event is recalled over and over again (awake and asleep).
Avoidance:

- Avoidance of anything that may remind one of the past events,
- Feeling detached;
- Unable to feel emotions. Numbness;
- Lack of interest;
- Unable to function normally.

What is The Treatment?

There is good success with early and proper treatment.

Immediate Treatment:

Counselling:

- To encourage recollection of the stressful experience and to express emotions;
- To work through the event;
- To deal with any guilt feelings;
- Medication to reduce symptoms of anxiety or depression may be necessary.
Later Treatment:
Assessment, Counselling And Education Of Patient And Family:

- Reassurance that feelings and behaviour are normal;

- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT);

  - Examining thoughts that cause the problem. Teaching relaxation techniques and ways of coping.

Discharge Instructions:

- If medications is advised, it is important to keep taking them as prescribed.

- Keep the clinic appointment with the doctor so that your progress can be maintained and monitored.

For further information, please call:

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