

## **P-981 - SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS IN WIVES OF WAR VETERANS WITH PTSD**

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**Introduction:** Wives of PTSD affected war veterans experience a wide range of psychosocial difficulties including secondary traumatic stress (STS).

**Objectives and aims:** To compare level of STS symptoms, emotional functioning and perceived quality of life between wives of PTSD affected veterans, wives of veterans without PTSD and wives of non-veterans in Croatia. To investigate the effect of veterans' PTSD, wives' knowing of the veterans' war trauma, and wives' personal war experiences on STS.

**Method:** A total of 150 married women participated in the study. Fifty wives of PTSD affected veterans were recruited through Referral Center for Psychotrauma Rijeka, while 50 wives of veterans without PTSD and 50 wives of non-veterans were recruited using the snowball method. Sociodemographic questionnaire, Brief Symptom Inventory, Manchester short assessment of quality of life, and Modified questionnaire for secondary traumatization were administered.

**Results:** Thirty-six percent of wives of PTSD affected veterans meet the criteria for secondary traumatic stress disorder. Wives of PTSD affected veterans report significantly higher level of STS symptoms compared with wives of non-PTSD veterans. Also, wives of PTSD affected veterans report higher level of psychological difficulties and have lower perceived quality of life compared with other two groups. Multifactor analysis shows main effect of wives' knowing the veteran's traumatic event on STS, and main effect of veterans' PTSD on emotional functioning of their wives.

**Conclusions:** Clinicians working with war related PTSD should be aware of secondary traumatic effect on the spouses. Systemic approach in psychotherapeutic treatment of PTSD should be considered.