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Traumatic stress in intensive care staff: associations with burnout and coping 15:15–15:30

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Background: A recent meta-analysis has found that healthcare workers are at risk of posttraumatic stress symptoms arising from work-related critical incidents. It is hypothesized that repeated exposure to traumatic medical events in Intensive Care settings places this group of health professionals at increased risk of developing symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). *Objectives:* 1) To ascertain level of posttraumatic stress symptomatology in a mixed staff group working in an intensive care setting. 2) To examine associations between PTSD symptoms, burnout and coping strategies. 3) To determine whether the use of particular coping strategies was associated with scores on a PTSD screening instrument. *Design:* Cross-sectional questionnaire study *Participants:* Fifty-eight health professionals working on a pediatric/neonatal intensive care unit. *Measures:* Trauma screening questionnaire (TSQ); abbreviated maslach burnout inventory (aMBI), list of coping strategies. *Results:* In total 48 (83%) participants reported at least one posttraumatic stress symptom in the previous week and a significant number, $n = 10$ (17%), scored above the clinical cut-off on the TSQ, suggesting they were at risk of developing PTSD in relation to traumatic work-related experiences. There was no significant association with gender, number of years qualified, whether the staff member lived alone or had children, or whether they were a doctor or a nurse. Scores on the TSQ were however associated with scores for emotional exhaustion ($r = 0.496, p < 0.001$) and depersonalization ($r = 0.273, p = 0.038$) on the aMBI. People with higher TSQ scores were more likely to report ignoring stress ($p = 0.008$) and taking time off ($p = 0.039$) as coping strategies and less likely to say they had hobbies ($p = 0.02$). *Conclusion:* A significant minority of intensive care staff reported PTSD symptoms relating to their work. Symptoms were independent of demographic factors or length of experience but were related to burnout. More research is needed on the prevalence of psychological distress in this group.