4. States, providers, schools and others considering implementing an EBT should consider prioritizing EBTs that have a TTT model for improving sustainability.

“Isolation, loss, everything associated with the pandemic has put a lot of pressure on our mental health system,” Lang said. “EBTs lead to better outcomes, more equitable outcomes, which is all the more reason to continue to get them out and make them more available.”

British study: PTSD symptoms present in COVID-19 survivors

While much has been studied and researched about the mental health implications of the pandemic, a new study has found post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms in patients with COVID-19.

Researchers found that while the connection was strongest with patients that had been on a ventilator, other COVID-19 patients who had been admitted to hospitals and not put on a ventilator still showed major signs of PTSD. The British study, “Post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms in COVID-19 survivors: online population survey,” was published online in the Royal College of Psychiatrists’ BJPsych Open Feb. 9.

Researchers noted that given that PTSD is a common consequence of exposure to extremely stressful acute circumstances, high rates of PTSD in COVID-19 survivors have been predicted, especially in cases of severe illness.

The aims of the current study were to examine PTSD symptoms in survivors of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 and to address whether these differed as a function of COVID-19 symptom severity and treatment. Researchers hypothesized that PTSD would be disproportionately elevated in those requiring inpatient admission, especially those requiring ventilation support, compared with those who had mild COVID-19 symptoms that had been managed at home.

Method

Researchers collected data in May 2020 as part of a broader citizen science study, “The Great British Intelligence Test” (GBIT). The GBIT study was originally set up to explore intelligence and cognition in the general public. However, with the emergence of the pandemic, researchers say they applied for an ethics amendment to include a questionnaire on COVID-19, in addition to their originally planned mental health and cognitive measures.

“This enabled us to identify people with a self-reported diagnosed history of COVID-19 infection, including those who reported they had received a positive confirmation via a biological test,” they wrote. This had the methodological advantage that none of the advertisements/materials mentioned COVID-19 or PTSD, thereby minimizing topic-specific selection bias, according to researchers.

This study examined PTSD symptoms in 13,049 survivors of suspected or confirmed COVID-19, from the U.K. general population, as a function of severity and hospital admission status.

Results

The study found that of the study participants, 9,200 (70.5%) reported they had not experienced breathing problems, 3,466 (26.6%) reported breathing problems but not requiring medical input, 176 (1.3%) reported they had breathing problems requiring medical support at home, 147 (1.1%) reported hospital admission but without needing a ventilator and 60 (0.5%) reported hospital admission including ventilation. Overall, 361 (2.8%) of these individuals reported that they had received a confirmatory biological test result.

PTSD symptom scores varied significantly across the groups. According to the study, this was due to greater PTSD levels in those requiring medical support at home, those requiring hospital admission without ventilation and those requiring hospital admission with ventilator support.

The study found that intrusive images were the most prominent elevated symptom. Adequate psychiatric provision for such individuals

‘Anything that’s life-threatening can potentially cause PTSD.’

Eugene G. Lipov, M.D.

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will be of paramount importance, noted researchers.

Implications

The study’s findings are no surprise, said Eugene G. Lipov, M.D., physician researcher and anesthesiologist who is best known for his treatment of PTSD using the stellate ganglion block. The procedure involves an anesthetic to block the nerves going from the ganglion nerve to the brain.

“A lot of Americans are under stress,” Lipov told MHW. “When somebody gets COVID-19, that’s frightening. Half a million lives have been lost.” Lipov said someone with COVID-19 knows the chance of dying can be much higher. At the next level, they could be intubated, which is even more frightening, said Lipov, who was not involved in the current study.

Everybody is scared,” he said. "The fear makes perfect sense from my perspective." People can lose their sense of smell and the virus may also directly have an effect on the brain, he noted. People with the virus are “exhausted and may experience a brain fog,” Lipov said.

“ Anything that’s life-threatening can potentially cause PTSD,” said Lipov. “One-quarter of women who have a mastectomy have PTSD.”

The data confirmed the hypothesis that PTSD symptoms were disproportionately elevated in those requiring inpatient admission, especially those requiring ventilation support, compared with those who had mild COVID-19 symptoms that had been managed at home, researchers stated.

Collectively, these findings highlight the importance of following up survivors of COVID-19 infection for PTSD, stated researchers. The current cross-sectional data provides impetus to examine PTSD symptoms longitudinally in COVID-19 survivors, to further inform the need for health care provision in this setting and understand the direct and indirect impact of the pandemic, they said.

“COVID survivors need to be watched very carefully and treated as soon as they can,” added Lipov. “My fear is that these people are at risk of killing themselves.”

Homelessness from page 1

“People experiencing homelessness in California are disproportionately African-American or Indigenous,” Snyder said. “The bill would require local plans to address that inequity.”

Guiding principles

Snyder said that from the perspective of the Steinberg Institute, AB 816 reflects three fundamental premises:

• First, housing constitutes a basic human need, no less important than health care, education or numerous other services.
• Homelessness in California occurred largely as a result of government policies, ranging from federal government cuts in rental assistance to restrictive local zoning to the closing of psychiatric institutions without sufficient provision for community-based mental health services. “These were deliberate choices, often with racial undertones,” Snyder said. “However, we can use the flip side of these government choices to end homelessness.”

‘We’re very realistic; we need ongoing funding to address homelessness.’

Lisa Engel

• California can apply the same zeal with which it has attacked complex policy initiatives such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions to the homelessness issue, using its ingenuity and resources to set measurable goals, monitor progress and correct course when necessary. “Nobody innovates like we do,” Snyder said.
• Assembly Member David Chiu, a San Francisco Democrat, introduced the legislation last month. It combines previous bills that had separately addressed the homelessness-reduction goals and the establishment of the Inspector General role. Last year’s legislation cleared the Assembly but did not make it out of the Senate Appropriations Committee, ostensibly because of budget concerns at a time when California and all states have been laser-focused on responses to the pandemic.

Attention to this newly introduced legislation would help to renew California Gov. Gavin Newsom’s pre-pandemic focus on initiatives to end homelessness in the state. Before the COVID-19 crisis hit, Newsom had devoted virtually all of a State of the State address to the subject of ending homelessness.

Assembly Bill 816 grew out of work from the governor’s Council of Regional Homeless Advisors, a group led in part by Sacramento Mayor and longtime mental health champion Darrell Steinberg.

Lisa Engel, chief consultant to the Assembly’s Housing and Community Development Committee, told MHW that as the mayor of a large California city, Steinberg sees himself and other mayors as not having full control over all of the resources that can be brought to bear on the homelessness issue. Assembly Bill 816 would require the various levels of government to work together to come up with executable plans, Engel said.

The inspector general would