The Treatment of Psychological Trauma: Current Evidence and Future Directions

Thanos Karatzias
Professor of Mental Health
Consultant Clinical Psychologist

Outline

• Impact of negative life events
• Psychological therapies and effectiveness for
  ✓ adulthood trauma
  ✓ childhood trauma
• Future developments
Adverse life events

Can be traumatic (i.e. can affect our well being in some way) but not always. WHY?
Why and How adverse life events become traumatic?

- Is it the severity of the event? Human loss? Litigation?
- Is it the individual? Previous experience? His / her perception of what is happening? How serious it was? How it was processed in the brain? Neurobiology?
- Is it the situation? Pre- during – post – trauma factors?
- A combination of all the above?
  - Do we really know?

Not really … but we know for sure that….  

Janoff-Bulman’s Assumptive World Theory (1992)

Adverse life events violate our positive perceptions of ourselves and others, and our belief in a just, meaningful, and benign world.

Psychological Interventions
What is a traumatic event (APA, 2000)?

A traumatic event involves the threat of death or serious injury or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others that is accompanied by intense feelings of fear, helplessness or horror.

Any event can be potentially traumatic.

How prevalent is exposure to traumatic events?

- Representative sample of n = 1000 adults in US (Noris, 1992)
- Over their lifetimes, 69% of the sample had experienced at least one event including robbery, physical assault, sexual assault, tragic death, motor vehicle accident, combat, fire, other disaster, other hazard
- Tragic death occurred most often (30.2%)
Is exposure to traumatic events serious?

- It has been estimated that by 2020 psychological trauma will be amongst the leading causes of disability alongside depression and heart disease (Michaud et al., 2001).

What happens to people after they are exposed to traumatic events?
Griensven et al. (2006)
n = 371 random sample of displaced Tsunami-affected adults in southern Thailand, 8 weeks after the disaster

- Anxiety: 37%
- PTSD: 12%
- Depression: 30%
- No condition: 21%

Shalev et al. (1998)
n = 211 physical trauma survivors from a general’s hospital emergency room, 4-months post-trauma

- PTSD: 17.5%
- Depression: 14.2%
- 43.2% co-morbidity
- No disorder: 68.3%
Is it just mental health that could be affected from trauma?

Physical health following traumatic events
D’Andrea et al. (2011) review

- **Cardiovascular disorder**: stress increases systolic pressure
- **Immune disorders**: stress decreases natural killer [NK] cells and cytotoxic T cells
- **Gastrointestinal conditions**: trauma alters contractile responses of the colon
- **Reproductive disorders**: Preterm delivery is 2.8 times more likely in women with PTSD than women without (Regal et al, 2007)
- **Musculoskeletal and pain disorders** particularly fibromyalgia
No wonder then ....

Increased health care utilization following trauma
Hulme (2000)

- Female survivors of sexual abuse report ....
  - More physical and psychosocial symptoms
  - Greater intensity and frequency of symptoms
  - More primary care visits

INCREASED HEALTH CARE COSTS
Focus on psychological trauma and PTSD

Why?
By treating trauma symptomatology we may be able to improve mental health (co-morbidities) and perhaps physical health and well-being.
DSM – IV Diagnostic Criteria
309.81 Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

A. Exposure to a traumatic event.
B. Persistent re-experienced through images, thoughts, or perceptions or recurrent dreams.
C. Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma.
D. Persistent symptoms of increased arousal (e.g. inability to stay asleep, difficulty concentrating, anger outbursts).
E. Duration for more than 1 month.
F. Clinical impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

Prevalence of PTSD in the general population

• The lifetime prevalence of PTSD is about 6.8% (Kessler et al., 2005).
• 80% of individuals with PTSD meet criteria for one additional co-morbid psychiatric condition, and 40% meet criteria for two or more additional co-morbid psychiatric conditions such as depression, anxiety, substance use (e.g. Tarrier & Sommerfield, 2003).
Prevalence of PTSD in specific populations

- Parents of premature babies: 67 - 76% (Karatzias et al., 2007)
- Prisoners 4% to 21.4% (Goff et al. 2007)
- HIV: 30-35% (Tedstone and Tarrier, 2003)
- People with LDs: ?
- Older adults: ?

Is PTSD Treatable?
Psychological Therapies for PTSD

NICE Guidelines (2005) recommend:

- Trauma focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (TfCBT)
- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

A minimum of 8-12 sessions should be routinely offered

What is TfCBT?

EVENT → AVOIDANCE → EXPOSURE → NEGATIVE THOUGHTS
What is EMDR?

Patient performs bilateral saccadic eye movements while he/she simultaneously concentrated on traumatic memories.

Eye movements will facilitate processing of traumatic memories.

Scottish trials of TfCBT and EMDR
EMDR vs. TfCBT vs. WL
(Power et al., 2002; Karatzias et al., 2007)

PTSD

- Pre
- Post
- Follow up

- CBT
- EMDR
- WL

EMDR vs. TfCBT vs. WL
(Power et al., 2002; Karatzias et al., 2007)

Anxiety

- Pre
- Post
- Follow up

- CBT
- EMDR
- WL
EMDR vs. TfCBT vs. WL
(Power et al., 2002; Karatzias et al., 2007)

**Depression**

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**Disability**

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EMDR vs. TfCBT vs. WL
(Power et al., 2002; Karatzias et al., 2007)

Both treatments equally effective with a slight advantage in favour of EMDR for symptoms of depression

Female patient gender is one of the best predictors of treatment outcome (women engage better in therapy)

Results were produced in fewer number of treatment sessions for EMDR (mean 4.2) than TfCBT (mean 6.4) patients.

EMDR vs. Emotional Freedom Techniques
Karatzias et al. (2011)

The patient is tapping on the ends of the 14 major meridian points located on the face, upper body and hands, while he / she is concentrating on a traumatic event.
EMDR vs. EFT
Karatzias et al. (2011)

**Follow-up**

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**HADS Anxiety**

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**HADS Depression**

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**CAPS Re-experience**

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**CAPS Avoidance**

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**CAPS Hyperarousal**

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**CAPS Total**

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EMDR vs. Emotional Freedom Techniques
Karatzias et al. (2011)

✓ Equally effective
✓ Equally acceptable
✓ Equal response rapidity (4 sessions)

BOTH INTERVENTIONS REMAIN ATHEORETICAL TO A LARGE EXTEND

Treatment Outcome for PTSD

CBT = EMDR
EMDR = EFT

COMMON FACTOR?

ADULTHOOD TRAUMA

EXPOSURE
What about childhood trauma?

Is childhood trauma common?

WHO (2010)

World statistics:

• 20% of women and 5–10% of men report being sexually abused as children
• 25–50% of all children report being physically abused
Is childhood trauma more serious?

Adulthood vs. childhood trauma

Disasters
Accidents
Death of a loved one
Interpersonal violence

PTSD
Depression
Anxiety
Substance Misuse

Abuse (Physical, Psychological Sexual)
Neglect (Physical, Emotional)

PTSD, depression, anxiety eating, personality, sexual, psychotic, dissociative and somatoform disorders, behavioural problems including self-injurious behaviour, self-mutilation, early involvement in sexual activity or prostitution, sexual perpetration, alcohol problems, later revictimization and social impairment and emotional difficulties such as high levels of hostility, anger, interpersonal sensitivity and self-esteem impairment.
Childhood adversity and mental health
Kessler et al. (2010)

Childhood adversities account for 29.8% of all disorders

Why childhood trauma can be more severe?
Trauma and Developmental Trajectories

Competency

Type I

Traumatic event knocks the person “off course”

Interventions following disclosure of complex trauma

Herman (1992)

Stage 1: Establishing safety and stabilisation
Psychoeducational approaches

Stage 2: Reconstructing the traumatic story
Exposure therapies

Stage 3: Community Reintegration

RECOVERY
Developing and evaluating new interventions for complex trauma (Stage I)

Stage I: Survive & Thrive

- Psychoeducational in nature as suggested by MATRIX (NES)
- 10 sessions
- Low intensity
- Group based
- Aim: To help patients stabilise, help them make the links between traumatic history and current pathology, prepare them for intensive therapy.
What's in the course: example sessions

- Week 5: Anxiety
- Week 6: Anger
- Week 7: Depression
- Week 8: Shame and guilt
- Week 9: Flashbacks, nightmares and dissociation
- Week 10: Assertiveness and looking forward

Survive & Thrive Evaluation

Karatzias et al. (in press)
In a sample of community CSA survivors (n=37). Completers were less likely to report self-harm, alcohol and substance misuse and involvement in illegal and antisocial behaviours at post-treatment and follow-up.

Ball, Karatzias et al. (2013)
In a sample of female offenders (n=24) with a history of interpersonal trauma, traumatic symptomatology and overall distress significantly improved at post-treatment.
Stage II: Trauma Recovery and Empowerment (TREM)

- Manualised, structured group intervention program of 33 sessions (75 minutes) offered over a 9-month period. The programme is divided into four parts:
  
  **Part I: Empowerment (11 sessions)**
  E.g. gender identity, sexuality, interpersonal boundaries.

  **Part II: Trauma Recovery (10 sessions)**
  E.g. impact of physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

  **Part III: Advanced Trauma Recovery Issues (9 topics)**
  E.g. blame, responsibility, and the role of forgiveness in recovery.

  **Part IV: Closing Rituals (3 topics)**
  i.e. planning own continued recovery journey.

Effectiveness of TREM (Karatzias et al., in preparation for submission)

- A Scotland wide study
- 5 Health Boards
- Modified version of TREM
Key questions for the future

- How and why interventions are effective?
- Are interventions helpful for vulnerable traumatised populations such as people with LDs and forensic populations?
- Do interventions improve physical health?
Focus on specific populations

- **Prisoners and forensic populations**
  Mahoney & Karatzias (2012): Trauma highly prevalent in forensic populations.
  Power, Karatzias et al. (2014): EMDR vs. WL in female prisoners
  Mahoney & Karatzias (2014): S+T vs. WL in female prisoners

- **People with LDs**
  Karatzias, Brown et al. (2013): Phenomenology of trauma and adaptation of psychological interventions for people with LDs

Focus on new interventions or existing ones?

**ADULT/OD TRAUMA**
- Active ingredients and predictors of outcome of treatments

**CHILDHOOD TRAUMA**
- Effectiveness of person centred approaches
- Effectiveness of integrative approaches.
Thank you for attending

References

References


