

BH 365 PODCAST: TRAUMA & AGING



BRAIN HEALTH 365

Trauma and Health are Linked

An individual's trauma exposure is linked to their propensity for developing a wide range of conditions that can negatively impact their health. Older adult trauma survivors are especially vulnerable as their trauma history can result in high rates of physical, mental, and cognitive decline.

Trauma and Brain Health

Traumatic events can affect various areas of the brain and can lead to lasting changes in neurological response resulting in persistent traumatic stress symptoms. These symptoms can include constant fear, hypervigilance, and difficulties sleeping, concentrating, thinking clearly, and regulating emotions.

Trauma and Dementia

Traumatic events are associated with an increased likelihood of trauma survivors to develop dementia in older adulthood. Additionally, older adults with a history of trauma may experience worsening of trauma symptoms with the onset of dementia.

2X Veterans with PTSD are twice as likely to develop dementia in older adulthood compared to veterans without PTSD.



The Difficulty of Uncovering Trauma History in Older Adults

Older adult survivors of trauma may have trouble seeking help with trauma symptoms or associated health consequences because:

- Older adults may not see the role of trauma in their health
- Older adults may fear the stigma associated with their trauma history
- Healthcare providers may not recognize the signs or symptoms of trauma in older adults
- Healthcare providers may not know how to provide treatment for trauma symptoms
- Trauma symptoms in older adults can present differently than in younger individuals or be masked by other health conditions
- Trauma survivors have limited access to person-centered, trauma-informed care.

Trauma is associated with the following health conditions:

Physical Health



- Lung disease
- Gum disease
- Fibromyalgia
- Chronic fatigue
- Cardiovascular disease
- Gastrointestinal disorders
- Endocrine disorders
- Reproductive disorders

Mental Health



- Anxiety
- Depression
- Suicidal Ideation
- Mood Disorders
- Eating disorders
- Substance abuse

Cognitive Health



- Dementia
- Sleep Disorders
- Cognitive Impairments

If you or a loved one have experienced trauma and realize it is affecting your current health, please seek help.

It doesn't get better on its own.



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