

Trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TF-CBT) for post-traumatic stress symptoms after traffic accidents

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Background: It is an unfortunate fact that traffic accidents on Iran's roads cause thousands of deaths and injuries every year and many people experience traumatic events. Approximately a quarter of exposed patients develop significant symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Since PTSD places patients at increased risk for other psychiatric and medical conditions and may derail normal developmental processes, it is important for these patients to receive early and effective treatments.

Objectives: This study reviewed the application of TF-CBT for the treatment of PTSD in patients with traffic accident.

Materials and Methods: In this review study, data gathering was done by searching databases including Google and scientific databases as well as hand searching library resources.

Results: Cognitive therapy for PTSD aims to help patients correct erroneous cognitions. Behavioral therapy for PTSD seeks to decrease symptoms through exposure. CBT includes cognitive and behavioral components often along with other components such as education and coping skills. In a meta-analysis of 14 randomized trials involving 658 patients with PTSD, trauma-focused CBT led to greater reduction in PTSD symptoms than routine care. In a RCT, 152 patients attending an accident and emergency department displaying psychological distress following physical injury were randomized 1–3 weeks post-injury to a four-session cognitive-behavioral intervention that started 5–10 weeks after the injury or to no intervention and then followed for 13 months. At 13 months, the total impact of event scale score was significantly reduced in the intervention group.

Conclusions: TF-CBT for patients with acute stress disorder has been shown to be efficacious in reducing the likelihood of subsequent development of PTSD. Despite the impressive level of empirical support for TF-CBT, many professionals remain unaware of its advantages and many children and parents who could benefit do not receive such treatment. Further more, in Iran, there may not yet be any TF-CBT trained therapists. Therefore, professionals should be encouraged to acquire the needed training and to implement the TF-CBT.

Keywords: post-traumatic stress, traffic, accidents