

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER Factsheet

August 2021

What is dual diagnosis?

Dual diagnosis describes a condition when a person with both a mental health diagnosis and a substance use disorder. PTSD and substance use disorders frequently occur together. This comorbidity is associated with poorer treatment outcomes than for either condition alone. Several psychological therapies are successful at treating each disorder individually, however when occurring together, they may be harder to treat.

What is the evidence for psychological therapies for dual diagnosis?

Moderate to low quality evidence found a small improvement in PTSD symptoms in people with a dual diagnosis following individual psychological treatments that have a trauma-focus when compared to treatment as usual. This effect remained for up to seven months. There was also a small reduction in substance use with individual psychological therapy with a trauma-focus at 5 to 7 months follow-up, but not immediately following treatment. The only other significant improvement in substance use was with a full dose of a group therapy called Seeking Safety. This was found immediately post-treatment but not at follow-up. There were no significant benefits for PTSD symptoms or substance use with non-trauma-based treatments or with other group treatments.

For more information see the technical table

HOW YOUR SUPPORT HELPS

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NeuRA (Neuroscience Research Australia) is one of the largest independent medical and clinical research institutes in Australia and an international leader in neurological research.

Diseases of the brain and nervous system pose the greatest health, economic and social burden of any disease group because they are chronic, debilitating and have no known cures.

Medical research is the cornerstone of efforts to advance the health and wellbeing of families and the community. Our dedicated scientists are focussed on transforming their research into significant and practical benefits for all patients.

While we hope you find this information useful, it is always important to discuss any questions about PTSD and its treatment with your doctor or other health care provider.