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COST OF CARING AND BURNOUT IN PARTNERSHIP RELATIONS OF CHRONIC PTSD-VETERANS' SPOUSES

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Context: PTSD-veterans' spouses often become indirect victims of their partner's dysfunction, confronting many stressors including relationship crisis, rearrangement of family roles, social isolation and adjustment to clinical course of disease.

Objective: Compare levels of caretaker burden and burnout in partnership relations of PTSD and non-PTSD veterans' spouses, particularly in situation where the spouses have PTSD themselves.

Methods: Test group consisted of 154 veterans who are undergoing treatment for war psychotraumatization caused PTSD at the Clinical hospital Mostar, and their spouses. Control group consisted of 77 war veterans without PTSD, and their spouses. The General demographic questionnaire, Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ), the Experience of Subjective and Objective Burden and Maslach Burnout Inventory were used in research.

Results: PTSD-veterans' spouses had significantly higher results on all subscales of the caretaker burden questionnaire and partnership relations burnout questionnaire. When both partners have PTSD, the burden of subjective demands and subjective stress, and burnout in partnership are significantly higher in comparison with the couples where only the veteran has PTSD or when partners don't have PTSD. The difference wasn't found in the objective burden when both partners have PTSD in comparison with the case when only the veteran has PTSD.

Conclusion: PTSD-veterans' spouses in comparison with the non-PTSD veterans' spouses are exposed to more objective burden of life, burden of partner's subjective demands and subjective perception of stress overburden, and their burnout is also higher. The burden of subjective demands, subjective stress and burnout are even more prominent when the spouse has PTSD.