



American College of Neuropsychopharmacology

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PTSD Increases Risk of Autoimmune Disease

HOLLYWOOD, FL (December 5, 2012) – A new study has established a link between post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and vulnerability to developing autoimmune disorders such as rheumatoid arthritis. The findings were presented today at the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ACNP) Annual Meeting.

The study, led by Aoife O'Donovan and Thomas Neylan at The University of California, San Francisco, examined the link between the diagnosis of PTSD and subsequent development of autoimmune disorders. Data for the study were obtained from more than 673,000 individuals, including all Iraq and Afghanistan US military veterans who were less than 55 years of age and received VA healthcare between late 2005 and early 2012. PTSD was diagnosed in close to 210,000 of the veterans receiving treatment.

Compared to veterans with no mental health issues, those diagnosed with PTSD had significantly greater risk for subsequent diagnosis with autoimmune disorders, such as rheumatoid arthritis, inflammatory bowel disease, multiple sclerosis and lupus. The same study also found that women had a higher risk for developing autoimmune disorders than men, and that a diagnosis of PTSD further increased this risk.

According to O'Donovan, “the finding is striking as the pattern of PTSD increasing the risk of autoimmune disorders was consistent across every disorder that we examined”.

The findings suggest that particular attention should be paid to those individuals diagnosed with PTSD as they may be at greater risk of developing debilitating autoimmune disorders.

As noted by Neylan, “inflammatory autoimmune disorders like rheumatoid arthritis are often associated with higher incidence of higher cardiovascular disease and mortality rates. Therefore, it will be important to determine if, by treating symptoms of PTSD, we can reduce autoimmune disorders and risk of heart disease in veterans and other affected individuals.”

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ACNP, founded in 1961, is a professional organization of more than 700 leading scientists, including four Nobel Laureates. The mission of ACNP is to further research and education in neuropsychopharmacology and related fields in the following ways: promoting the interaction of a broad range of scientific disciplines of brain and

behavior in order to advance the understanding of prevention and treatment of disease of the nervous system including psychiatric, neurological, behavioral and addictive disorders; encouraging scientists to enter research careers in fields related to these disorders and their treatment; and ensuring the dissemination of relevant scientific advances. www.acnp.org.