

MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS: HELP VETERANS CHOOSE EFFECTIVE PTSD TREATMENTS

Key Recommendations from the VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guideline (CPG) for PTSD

There are several effective treatments for PTSD. This quick guide can help you work with Veterans with PTSD to choose an effective option.



DID YOU KNOW?

- Many patients who seek physical healthcare have been exposed to trauma and have posttraumatic stress symptoms but have not received appropriate mental health care.
- Most patients with PTSD are not properly identified and are not offered education, counseling, or referrals for mental health evaluation.



PSYCHOTHERAPY RECOMMENDATIONS

The CPG for PTSD recommends individual trauma-focused psychotherapies as the best treatment option for PTSD. These are the most effective:



Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT), which teaches patients to reframe negative thoughts about trauma.



Prolonged Exposure (PE), which teaches patients how to gain control by facing their fears.



Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), which helps patients process and make sense of their trauma while paying attention to a back-and-forth movement or sound (such as a light or tone).



CO-OCCURRING CONDITIONS

The majority of patients who have PTSD also have co-occurring disorders, such as substance use disorder, depression, generalized anxiety disorders, and sleep disturbances. The VA/DoD CPG for PTSD recommends that:

1

The presence of a co-occurring disorder(s) should not prevent a patient from participating in a trauma-focused psychotherapy treatment for PTSD. This includes patients who have a co-occurring substance use disorder.

2

An independent assessment of co-occurring sleep disturbances in patients with PTSD is warranted, particularly when sleep problems pre-date PTSD onset or remain following successful completion of a course of treatment.

3

For insomnia in patients with PTSD, the use of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I) is indicated, unless an underlying medical or environmental etiology is identified or severe sleep deprivation warrants the immediate use of medication to prevent harm.

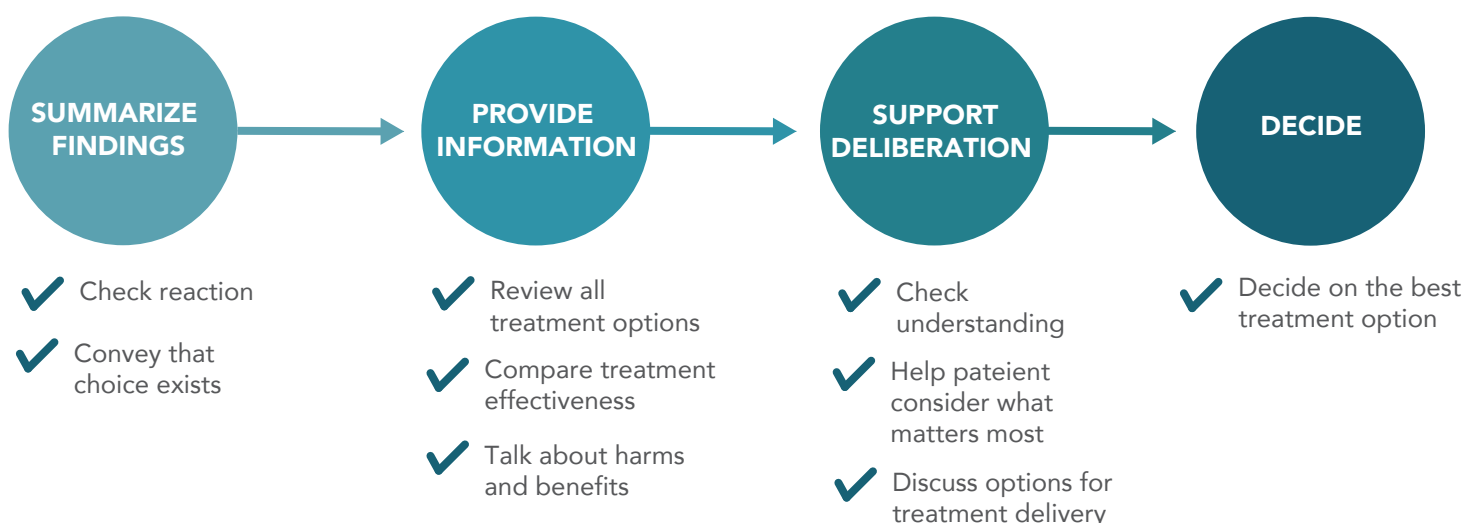
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USE SHARED DECISION MAKING

Once a diagnosis is made, the CPG recommends use a process of shared decision making with your patient to select a treatment. The free online [PTSD Treatment Decision Aid](#) can help. With this tool, patients can answer questions that will help them clarify their treatment goals, watch videos of providers explaining each treatment, and compare treatments in an interactive chart.

SHARED DECISION MAKING



PTSD SCREENING INSTRUMENTS

Conduct periodic screening of PTSD using validated measures such as the PTSD Checklist or PCL-5. The [PTSD Checklist \(PCL-5\)](#) is a 20-item self-report measure that assesses the 20 DSM-5 symptoms of PTSD. Use the PCL-5 to track symptom change and identify clinical gains or setbacks to your patient. Additionally, it can be used as an intervention tool when speaking to your patient about their current level of distress and how treatment can address these difficulties.

LEARN MORE

- Contact the [PTSD Consultation Program](#) for free, personalized consultation on treating Veterans with PTSD.
- Visit the [National Center for PTSD](#) for more information on treating patients with PTSD.