

# psychological Applications and Trends

2018

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## POST-STRESS DISORDERS IN SITUATION OF EASTERN UKRAINE PUBLIC CONFRONTATION

**Oleg Panchenko**

*Ukrainian Professional Psychiatric League (Ukraine),  
State Institution "Scientific – Practical Medical Rehabilitating – Diagnostic Center of the Ukrainian  
Ministry of Health" (Ukraine)*

### Abstract

Donbass military activity changes public and social situation dramatically. We can see public change of emphasis in the field of public medical-psychological aid. If people change or lose their place of residence, they will suffer from indeterminacy together with moving induced stress.

Nowadays, there are more than 200 thousand Anti-Terroristic Operation (ATO) combatants and more than two and half million internally displaced persons in Ukraine.

Throughout 2014-2017, the workers of State Institution «Scientific Practical Medical Rehabilitation Diagnostic Centre of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine» in Kostyantynivka city, Donetsk region, Ukraine carry on medical examinations of local population to diagnose various kinds of post-stress disorders. 2041 adult patients took part in this medical activity; all of them were the residents of the civilian conflict area. The examinations were conducted with the help of diagnostic, anthropometrical, neurophysiological, laboratory-clinical and biochemical diagnostic medical techniques.

In accordance with our psychodiagnostic findings, the dominant emotions of ATO area residents are anxiety, fear, annoyance, hopelessness and other disorders related to stressful situation in the region. 46.9% of the examined people were direct military actions eye-witness. 12.2% of them are internally displaced people. Among post-stress disorder promoting factors we can find various kinds of negative emotional states, threat of life, threat of financial and other tangible losses and unsatisfactory financial situation.

Neurotic and somatic disorders are interconnected with various stress situations: F42.1 mixed anxiety states and somatoform disorders – 22.1%, F43.1 post-traumatic stress disorders - 18.9%, F43.2 adaptation disorders – 3.2%, F45 somatoform disorders – 11.6%, F48.0 neurasthenia – 3.2%, F41 – panic disorders -23.1%, F42 obsessive-compulsive disorders - 4.2%.

So, military-civil conflict may be characterized by various psychological structural disorders. Monitoring data obtained give us an opportunity to emphasize urgent need in development of new medical psychological aid approaches. We should make an emphasis on various psychological problems resolution in conditions of high-level emotional stress situations, induced by various physical, material and financial losses. Urgent and first aid to the people who suffer of difficult life circumstances consists of anxiety level reduction and adaptive level promotion with help of complex medical psychological aid measures in rehabilitating centers. The ultimate objective of all aforementioned measures is to render psychological assistance to the population of the military conflict area.

**Keywords:** *Eastern Ukraine, civil confrontation, zone of the antiterrorist operation, fear, anxiety, psychosomatic disorders, medical and psychological help.*

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### 1. Introduction

Military actions in Donbass region changes social situation in Ukraine dramatically. There is a need to change the priorities in the field of medical psychological aid provision. Internally displaced people are suffering not only of transfer-induced stress, but also because of their personal socioeconomic situation uncertainty. There are more than 300,000 Anty-Terroristic Operation combatants and about 1,584,000 internally displaced peoplenow in Ukraine. Ukrainian socioeconomic situation is very straight at present too because of the continuous military actions, which threaten to civilians' lives, health and prosperity.

## 2. Design

According to the UNISEF data, the number of civilian victims in consequence of various armed conflicts around the world has increased dramatically. Military actions and social changes in the Eastern part of Ukraine lead to deterioration of traditional social infrastructure patterns and public relation stereotypes. All of that influences the regional social disorientation increasing and, as a result, social psychological stress situation development.

People who have lost or changed their habitations suffer not only of transfer-induced stress, but also of their social situation uncertainty. They are afraid of their health conditions deterioration, worry about their friends and relatives. All aforementioned factors promote our patients' post stress disorders development (Ioannidi and Poplavskaya 2015). Now there is an urge necessity to change general priorities in the field of medical-psychologic aid to the regional population.

## 3. Objectives

Our Aim is to investigate post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) development for the victims of regional military conflict, to validate rehabilitating medical aid measures and recommendations to the medical workers.

## 4. Methods

During the period of 2014-2017, the workers of State Institution "Scientific Practical Medical Rehabilitating Diagnostic Center of Ukrainian Ministry of Health" Kostiantynivka city, Donetsk region, Ukraine have conducted medical examination of the Donbass regional population to reveal and diagnose various post stress disorders. 2041 adult patients (68.7% female and 31.3% male ones), who live in the area of military civilian conflict, took part in our investigation. During our investigation, we have used various diagnostic, anthropometrical, neurophysiological, psycho-diagnostic, laboratory clinical and biochemical methodologies. Our clinical statistical investigation was conducted with help of specialized evaluation systems; among them are Mississippian diagnostic scale for PTSD (civilian and military versions recommended for psychogenic PTSD screening for military action combatants (Geuze E. 2008) and self-estimation questionnaire for emotional and physical state evaluation.

## 5. Discussion

According to the results of our psycho-diagnostic investigation, the main ATO region residents' prevailing emotions are anxiety, fear, irritation and helplessness associated with the current regional situation. 46.9% of the surveyed consider themselves as direct witnesses of hostilities, 12.2% of them were internally displaced people. The main contributing post-stress disorder development factors are adverse emotional states, life threatening situations, threat of material and financial losses and unsatisfactory financial situation.

According to the International Diseases Classification (MKB-10) it has been discovered that our patients suffered of neurotic and somatoform stress induced disorders: F41.2 – mixed anxiety and somatoform disorders - 22.1%, F43.1 – various posts tress disorders – 18.9%, F43.2 – adaptation disorders – 3.2%, F45 – somatoform disorders - 11.6%, F48.0 – neurasthenia – 3.2%, F41 – panic disorders – 23.1%, F42 - obsessive compulsory disorder – 4.2%.

According to the results of our psycho-diagnostic investigation, the great majority of the regional population currently suffers of anxiety (Figure 1). The sense of fear tends to decrease, but according to the data obtained, one in four examined respondents suffers of such kind of disorder.

It should be noticed that psychoemotional state changes leads to serious psychic disorders development (please, see table 1).

Figure 1. Diagnostic results (by the Mississippi diagnostic scale for PTSD). 1 – Individual PTSD signs. 2 – PTSD as a whole.

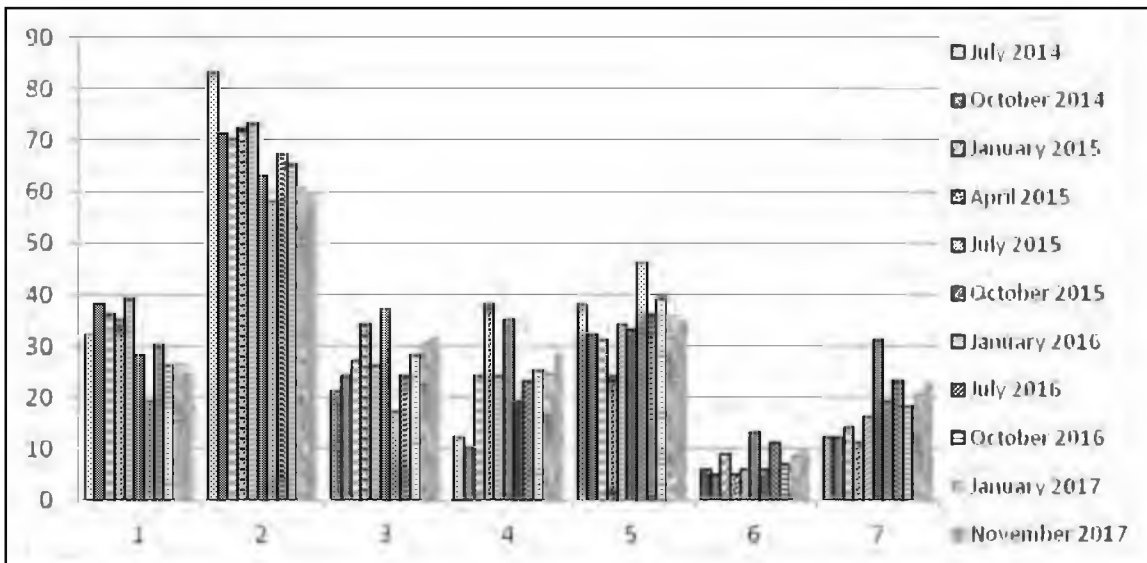


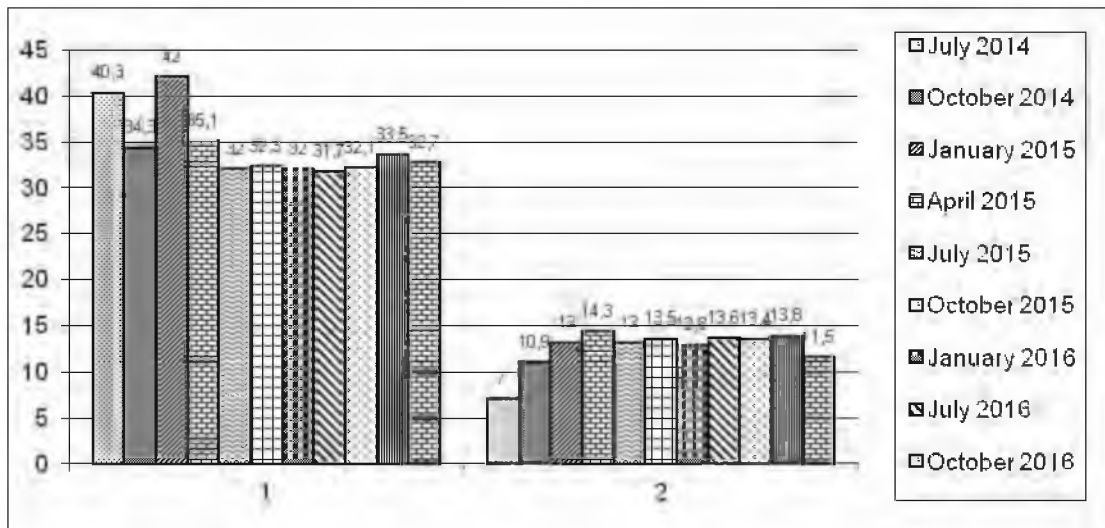
Table 1. Psychoemotional changes in the state.

Disorder category	%
F41.2 – mixed anxious and depressive disorder	22.1%
F43.1 – post traumatic stress disorder	18.9%
F43.2 – adaptive disorder	3.2%
F45 – somatoform disorder	11.6 %
F48.0 – neurasthenia	3.2%
F41 – panic disorder	23.1%
F42 – obsessive compulsory disorder	4.2%

As a result of complex diagnostic measures with help of Mississippi scale, conducted in the period from July 2014 till November 2017, it was revealed that the quantity of patients suffering from PTSD (13.8%) or some PTSD signs (33.5%) remains stably high (figure 2). It could be explained by both situation escalation in the region and patients’ psychic adaptive mechanisms exhaustion because of continues psycho-traumatic factors influence.

After investigation of Eastern Ukraine population mental condition it has been discovered that long-term psycho-traumatic situations influence associated with living in the area of hostilities and life-threatening situation can lead not only to various PTSD symptoms development, but also contribute to patients’ personality characteristics changes appearance.

Figure 2. Diagnostic measures results (according to PTSD Mississippi scale).



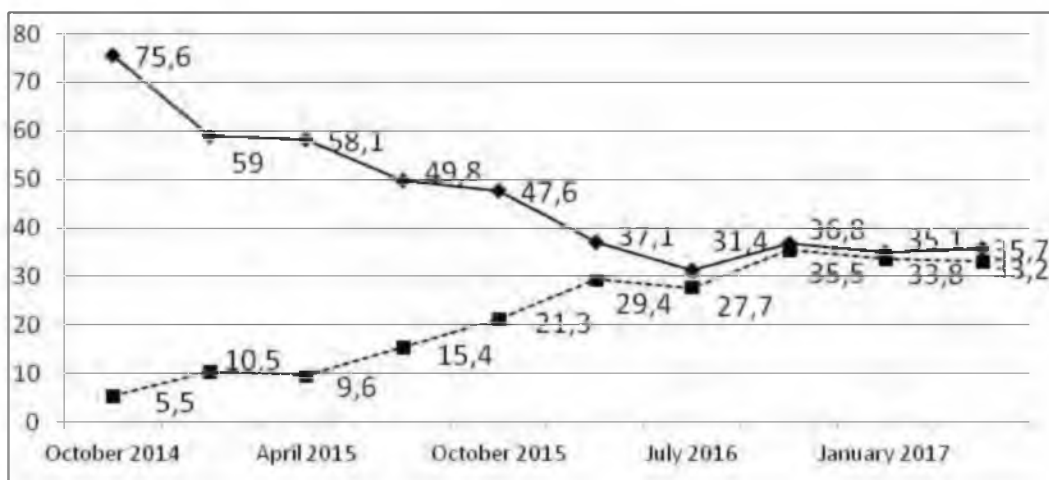


PTSD is a state of patients who suffer of multiple neurobiological systematic changes because of cognitive, affective and behavioral spheres dysregulation (Armour and O'Connor M. 2012). Not only directly traumatized patients could suffer of PTSD but the direct witnesses, victims' relatives, rescue workers and medical workers who became so called hidden victims during some disaster emergency activity (Ioannidi and Poplavskaya 2015).

During any civilian confrontation, information environment state is very important too. This environment conditions affect population mental state and psychological well-being in a certain way. Therefore, one of the objectives of the study was to determine the attitude of respondents to the information environment, its quality and necessity. Therefore, one of the objectives of our study was to determine the attitude of respondents to the information space in which they are located, the quality of information and the need for its receipt.

The results of our investigation of regional population information perception are presented on the Figure 3. It has been discovered that in the period from July 2014 until July 2017, civilians' need for new information has decreased from 75.6% to 35.7%, which is substantiated by them as a lack of reliance to political and social situation in the country provided by domestic mass media.

Figure 3. Obtained research results of ATO region population information perception (%). Need for new information: increased necessity in information (upper line), news ignoring (lower line).



## 6. Conclusions

Military actions in the Eastern Ukraine take place in densely populated regions of the country, contributing to the various post-stress disorders formation for both the direct military combatants and civilians. This kind of civil conflict could be characterized by various structural disorders. Regional civil population is still a subject of various constant intensity negative influences. The number of patients who suffer of various neurotic and stress-related disorders (such as panic states, obsessive-compulsive and dissociative disorders) remains stably high (over 33%). The number of patients, who suffer of some PTSD signs estimates 32%. mixed anxiety and depressive disorders estimates more than 22%. and PTSD as a whole estimates from 13% to 18%.

Obtained monitoring data emphasize the need of new approaches to medical and psychological aid development to the population with an emphasis on solving psychological problems in conditions of emotional stress associated with physical, material and financial losses. Urgent and high-priority assistance to people who are in difficult life circumstances consists in anxiety reduction and adaptation to new conditions of existence with the use of comprehensive medical and psychological measures in the conditions of the Centers for Rehabilitation and psychological support of the population.

This differentiated approach should be used for various post-stress disorders diagnosis and rehabilitation with regulated interaction between the medical, psychological and pedagogical communities, with the active participation of family members and the necessary social structures. All of that will ensure social well-being and security levels in Ukraine.

Such approach, as practice shows, is capable of providing not only timely adequate psychiatric aid, but also addressing psycho-prophylactic and psycho-corrective measures aimed to reduce psychological and psychosomatic consequences severity in the conduct of hostilities in the immediate and distant periods after such complex measures completion.

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