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**“Assessment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Among Emergency Medical Services Workers: A Survey Study Within An Urban Emergency Medical Service”**

**BACKGROUND:** Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is considered to be more prevalent in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and first responders than the general population due to the traumatizing events they witness regularly. Mental illness can have serious consequences if left untreated, such as worsening symptoms or thoughts and attempts of suicide, and it is a problem that needs to be addressed especially in more vulnerable populations. Natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina, which devastated the New Orleans area, and the COVID-19 pandemic could contribute to the development of PTSD in EMS workers. The aim of this study was to determine the prevalence of PTSD among EMS workers compared to the general population. Also, we sought to determine whether working during Hurricane Katrina built resilience by comparing two groups, those who worked through both Hurricane Katrina and the COVID pandemic and those that worked the COVID pandemic only.

**METHODS:** A cross-sectional survey was administered to the employees of New Orleans EMS. Participants from a variety of shifts who met the inclusion criteria completed a 31-item questionnaire, either on a hardcopy or online, to screen for PTSD. From the responses, a severity score was calculated using a validated PTSD DSM-IV tool, and the presence of the symptom pattern outlined by the National Center for PTSD was observed to determine if the participants displayed evidence of PTSD.

**RESULTS:** Of the 92 survey respondents, the average age was 35.9 +/- 1.14, with 42.4% being in the age range of 20-30. Males comprised 59.8% of the sample, and the majority of the participants, 67.4%, were paramedics. Of the responding EMS workers, 41.3% met criteria for significant PTS or PTSD, which is higher than the 6.1-9.2% lifetime prevalence of a national sample of adults in the United States and Canada. The cohort of EMS workers that worked during Hurricane Katrina and COVID-19 had a lower prevalence of PTSD, 30.4%, than the cohort that only worked during COVID-19, 50%.

**CONCLUSION:** EMS workers have higher prevalence rates of PTSD than the general population, but it appears that resilience can be built for future traumatic events from past events as evidenced by the Hurricane Katrina and COVID-19 cohort having lower rates of PTSD than the COVID-19 only cohort. This group that is more susceptible to PTSD than the general population and needs to have strong support systems and mental health professionals available for them to consult to ensure that their mental health is appropriately treated.