Chronic posttraumatic stress and its predictors in patients living with an implantable cardioverter defibrillator.

Patients with an implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD) show clinically relevant depression and anxiety, but little is known about their levels of posttraumatic stress. We assessed chronic posttraumatic stress attributable to a traumatic cardiac event and its predictors in patients at two time points after ICD placement. We investigated 107 consecutively enrolled patients (57±14 years, 62% men) on average 24±21 months after ICD placement (baseline) and again 41±18 months later (follow-up). All patients completed the Impact of Event Scale-Revised (IES-R) to self-rate the severity of posttraumatic stress (range 0-110). The 30% of patients with the highest IES-R scores (≥25) at baseline were defined as PTSD cases; the same threshold was applied to define PTSD caseness at follow-up. Posttraumatic stress increased from baseline to follow-up (19±22 vs. 25±19, p=5 shocks during follow-up) all predicted greater posttraumatic stress at follow-up (p-values<=0.029). Female gender, helplessness, and depression predicted PTSD at baseline (p-values<=0.022); low education and posttraumatic stress at baseline predicted PTSD at follow-up (p-values<=0.003). Between 2 and 5.5 years post-ICD placement chronic posttraumatic stress slightly increased and nearly one-fifth of patients had newly developed PTSD. The identified psychological predictors of long-term chronicity of posttraumatic stress...
might particularly inform behavioral interventions for ICD recipients.