

Viewing terrorist attacks on TV increases pain intensity: research

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"Exposure to media coverage of terrorist missile attacks increases pain levels in people already suffering from chronic pain," according to a new study by Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU) researchers.

"Does War Hurt? Effects of Media Exposure After Missile Attacks on [Chronic Pain](#)," published in the online version of the [Journal of Clinical Psychology in Medical Settings](#), showed that exposure to the attacks through the media predicted an increase in [pain intensity](#) and in the sensory component of pain during the pre-post war period, but did not predict depression or anxiety.

These findings contribute to the understanding of the effects of terrorism on physical and emotional distress, and identify chronic pain patients as a vulnerable population requiring special attention during terrorism-related stress.

Prof. Golan Shahar and Dr. Sheera F. Lerman of BGU's Department of Psychology, along with Dr. Zvia Rudich of Soroka University Medical Center, assessed patients regarding their pain, depression and anxiety, as well as their level of exposure following the missile attacks during Operation Cast Lead in Israel's Negev Region. Prof. Shahar is also affiliated with Yale University's Department of Psychiatry in New Haven, Connecticut.

Stress and media exposure were also strongly related, suggesting that the amount of television viewing related to the terrorist attacks may have

influenced how much stress the individual experienced.

"Patients' previous levels of emotional distress may affect their ability to cope with stressful situations, making stressors more prominent and influencing them to seek out more information about the situation," Prof. Shahar explains.

The study assessed 55 chronic pain patients treated at a specialty pain clinic. The patients completed self-report questionnaires regarding their [pain](#), depression and anxiety before and after the three-week missile attack.

Provided by American Associates, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

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