Barry wakes up every night at 11:37 after going to bed around 10:45. He notices that his shirt is drenched with sweat and he's had another nightmare about accidentally shooting a little girl after he thought she was an enemy. Barry knows he won't be able to fall back to sleep again until the sun comes up, but then he will have to go to work. This happens every night since he returned home from his third tour overseas. Barry is one of the countless victims of insomnia and sleep deprivation due to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. This makes it especially hard for Barry to function in his life at home.

Experts say that many veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder have trouble sleeping. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines insomnia as a prolonged and usually abnormal inability to get enough sleep. (“Insomnia”) One scientist says that insomnia is common in the overall population but even more common in veterans that are diagnosed with PTSD. (Manalastas) She says they can have trouble sleeping for various reasons, a few being the need to check their surroundings, incessant worrying, and the influences of drugs and alcohol or other medical problems. This researcher also gives natural ways to help veterans fall asleep. For example, she says using the bedroom for only sleep and sex, go to be only if really tired, and get out of bed at the same time each morning are a few of many things that can be tried. (Manalastas)

Scientists are working to create studies and methods that can help veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder to sleep better. One study at Pittsburgh consists of two weeks of evaluation, a sleep study, and then eight weeks of treatment. (Templeton) Another aims to take images of the brains of veterans with PTSD while they are sleeping to find what is different while experiencing nightmares or dreams in general. (Templeton) A cognitive behavioral study has found that a CBT-I treatment is working, but only in combat-related PTSD veterans. (Margolies et al. 2)

van Liempt's article states veterans that have sleep problems soon after they get back home are more likely to develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (van Liempt). This researcher collects reports from soldiers deployed to Afghanistan, then studying them specifically for symptoms of anxiety (van Liempt).

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs has a page dedicated to sleep problems in veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD: National Center for PTSD). They state that insomnia is present in 90-100% of Vietnam veterans that already have PTSD and 92% of active duty personnel with PTSD (PTSD: National Center for PTSD). It also says that there is evidence that suggests that over time these sleep problems become independent from the PTSD (PTSD: National Center for PTSD). The VA says the two ways to treat insomnia and other sleep problems are psychotherapy and medications (PTSD: National Center for PTSD).

Many people lack any knowledge of the terrors that veterans live in, let alone those with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and sleep disorders. Like Barry, many others suffer from these problems, which should be paid more attention to, and more time, research and money should be put in for the people that serve our country. They should not be left to fend for themselves.

Works Cited


