



spotlight on health

Trauma Across America

FDA Approves New Treatment For Posttraumatic Stress Disorder [Ⓢ]

(NAPSA)—The chain of tragic events in America has left many overwhelmed with feelings of intense fear and anxiety, helplessness and horror. Whether dealing with the loss of a loved one or worrying about the uncertainty of the future, people across the country are dealing with a wide range of emotions. For many, these feelings will gradually subside without intervention. Others may develop a debilitating condition known as posttraumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.

Affecting approximately 16 million Americans, PTSD develops after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event, or learning about the unexpected or violent death, serious harm or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associates. In fact, nearly one-quarter of people exposed to trauma will develop PTSD. Traumatic events can also include car accidents, natural disasters, physical attack or abuse, terrorist attack, robbery, kidnapping or sexual assault.

"We know from previous crises, like the Oklahoma City bombing, that there is a risk of increased rates of posttraumatic stress dis-

order," said Randall D. Marshall, M.D., associate professor of clinical psychiatry at Columbia University. "That is why it is critical that Americans are educated about the symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder and the importance of seeking help."

Symptoms of PTSD usually appear within three months of a traumatic event, but can be delayed for months, or even years. Re-experiencing, avoidance/emotional numbing and hyperarousal are the three symptom groups of PTSD.

- Symptoms of re-experiencing include "flashbacks" of the trauma and nightmares or other intrusive thoughts.

- Symptoms of avoidance/emotional numbing include avoidance of activities, places, people or topics associated with the trauma. Loss of interest in and withdrawal from everyday activities is also common.

- Symptoms of hyperarousal include irritability, jumpiness, outbursts of anger, an extreme sense of being "on guard," problems concentrating, and insomnia.

Diagnosis and treatment for PTSD is critical. If left untreated,

PTSD sufferers are:

- Six times more likely to attempt suicide
- Two to three times more likely to have a drug or alcohol abuse problem
- 60 percent more likely to have trouble in their marriages
- 40 percent more likely to fail high school or college

Treatment for PTSD includes therapy and often medication, such as *Paxil*[®] (paroxetine HCl), which was recently approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for the treatment of PTSD. *Paxil* has been available for more than eight years in the United States, and has been proven safe and effective for a wide range of anxiety disorders and depression.

"Millions of Americans have spent their lives haunted by their trauma, many of whom don't realize that what they are suffering from is a real and treatable condition," added Dr. Marshall. "Treatment offers sufferers a chance to regain control of their life."

If you think you or someone you may know is suffering from PTSD, please see a physician. For more on *Paxil*, call 1-800-445-9656 or visit www.paxil.com.

Note to Editors: *Paxil* is generally well-tolerated. As with many medications, there can be side effects. The most common side effects reported in PTSD studies include asthenia, sweating, nausea, dry mouth, diarrhea, decreased appetite, somnolence and sexual side effects. People taking MAO inhibitors or thioridazine should not take *Paxil*. Most people who experience side effects are not bothered enough to stop taking *Paxil*. When the decision is made to end treatment with *Paxil*, a gradual reduction in the dose rather than abrupt cessation is recommended whenever possible.