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**ON THE ISSUE OF MENTAL HEALTH
AMONG MILITARY PERSONNEL**

**ДО ПРОБЛЕМИ ПСИХІЧНОГО ЗДОРОВ'Я
ВІЙСЬКОВОСЛУЖБОВЦІВ**

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The mental health of military personnel is a complex, multifaceted, relevant, and significant issue in the context of the military actions in Ukraine, which began in 2014 and continue to this day.

In general, military service presents servicemen with unpredictable situations in which they must act under pressure and stress. Military personnel are required to be prepared for risk and danger, which can lead to the development of mental trauma and disorders. Military operations, stressful situations, prolonged exposure to danger and extreme stress, separation from family, and other factors can impact their emotional state and health, posing serious challenges to the mental health of military personnel.

Due to the unique challenges and stressful situations faced by the military, their mental health is constantly influenced, which can have serious consequences for individual well-being, mission tasks, and military activities as a whole. It should be noted that the mental health of military personnel is one of the key components of military readiness and operational effectiveness.

Mental health is an important component of social activity and the overall state of an individual, affecting their quality of life, professional activity, and social-communicative relationships with others. These considerations are supported by scientific research from scholars such as V. Bocheliuk, N. Zavatska, L. Karamushka, V. Korniienko, M. Mushkevych, L. Piletska, V. Shtyfurak, and others.

Conceptually, the term “mental health” was first used in 1979 at a meeting of the World Health Organization (WHO): “Mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.

A psychologically healthy person is one who feels harmonious and has a certain reserve of strength to overcome difficulties and a sufficient level of productivity in everyday life” [2].

This definition implies not only the absence of mental illnesses, disorders, and borderline states but also the personal and social dimensions of an individual’s inclusion in society.

Under such circumstances, the issue of the mental health of military personnel requires a comprehensive approach that considers the specifics of their professional activities and the unique stress factors.

Military activity includes a number of unique stress *factors* that significantly impact the mental health of military personnel and can cause various mental reactions and disorders, among which the key ones can be identified:

- *extreme stress*: participation in combat operations, where servicemen are in conditions of extreme stress and constant risk to their lives. This can cause anxiety, fear, and acute stress responses;

- *prolonged exposure to danger*: the unpredictability of situations and instability in combat zones can contribute to the development of chronic stress and health disorders;

- *trauma and losses*: participation in combat can lead to traumatic events that play a key role in the development of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental disorders;

- *social isolation*: distance from family, loved ones, friends, and social surroundings can lead to feelings of loneliness and alienation and, as a result, mental disorders;

- *adaptation to civilian life after service*: the transition from military to civilian life can be challenging due to the lack of understanding of the new roles in society.

Scientific research confirms that military personnel are at an increased risk of developing various mental disorders. Among the most common mental disorders in the military are post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and malignant stress reactions, including:

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD): This arises as a result of direct involvement in traumatic events, such as combat operations or disasters,

which leave long-lasting traumatic imprints on the psyche of military personnel.

Depression and anxiety disorders: These are often observed in military personnel due to prolonged emotional strain and the constant stress and high risks they face.

Alcohol and drug addiction: These can develop as attempts at self-medication in conditions of stress and emotional tension.

Malignant stress reactions: These are characterized by prolonged exposure to stress affecting mental health, which can lead to serious complications.

These conditions can arise from direct involvement in combat operations, prolonged emotional tension, and even exposure to extreme challenges. According to research, mental disorders among military personnel are a widespread phenomenon requiring a systematic approach to diagnosis, prevention, and treatment. A professional approach to psychological support for the military, including counseling, psychotherapy, and rehabilitation programs, is crucial for their well-being. Therefore, to maintain the mental health of military personnel and reduce the risk of mental disorders, it is necessary to apply:

- **psychological preparation and training:** developing the necessary knowledge, skills, and strategies for effective stress management and adaptation to new service conditions among military personnel. Systematic planning of daily routines and personal time helps military personnel alleviate tension, avoid additional anxiety, and feel calm, relaxed, and comfortable;

- **early detection and diagnosis:** a system of regular mental assessments is important for identifying symptoms of mental disorders at early stages;

- **individual and group psychotherapy:** providing individual and group psychotherapeutic support to restore the mental health of military personnel and reduce psychological discomfort after stressful situations;

- **social support:** ensuring support from colleagues, leadership, and families helps reduce feelings of isolation and enhances social adaptation for military personnel;

- **balanced nutrition:** it is important to consume a balanced diet daily, including meat, fish, vegetables, and fruits, as an imbalance of vitamins and trace elements can lead to anxiety disorders;

- **use of recreational resources:** recreational resources – both physical and intellectual—aid in restoring not only the psycho-emotional state of military personnel but also their physical health and well-being.

In summary, we can assert that the mental health of military personnel is a complex issue requiring a systematic approach and comprehensive strategies for the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of mental disorders. Integrating scientific research with practical support measures is critically important for maintaining optimal mental health for military personnel and ensuring their successful adaptation in all aspects of life. An effective psychological support system, including psychotherapy, training, and social support, is crucial for maintaining and preserving the mental health of military personnel at all stages of their service.

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