

Shell shock

Shell shock is a term coined in World War I by British psychologist Charles Samuel Myers to describe the type of **posttraumatic stress disorder** many soldiers were afflicted with during the war (before PTSD was termed).

Together with shell shock, the gunshot-related traumatic brain injury (GrTBI) is considered one of the typical, or signature, lesions of the Great **War** ¹⁾

The neurological and psychological manifestations of trauma, confinement, and terror became apparent throughout Europe as soldiers were evacuated from the trenches of the Western Front. The response in the **UK** evolved as a result of the experience of medical **staff** embedded with the troops in base **hospitals** and the philosophy of those treating returned soldiers in specialist establishment. There were widely disparate approaches to the **management** encompassing simple **supportive care**, a psychoanalytic approach and radical electric shock therapy. The latter was partially driven by the Queen Square experience in the UK but was also concurrently widely pursued throughout Europe. With experience, care was increasingly undertaken close to the front lines using a philosophy of immediacy and expectation of recovery. Post-war analysis was startlingly unsympathetic, yet the experiences and management of shell shock have guided psychiatric and medical understanding of functional illness and post-traumatic stress over the subsequent century. In this historical review, Howard sought to present features of the UK response to the neurological manifestations of trauma, the way in which these changed as the war proceeded and the political and medical response in the aftermath of war ²⁾

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Pesce A, Palmieri M, Frati A, Rustia A, Marrocco L, Caruso R, Santoro A, Wierzbicki V. A Forgotten Tale from the Great War: General Lorenzo Bonomo and the Birth of Italian War Neurosurgery. *World Neurosurg*. 2020 Aug;140:338-346. doi: 10.1016/j.wneu.2020.05.113. Epub 2020 Jun 12. PMID: 32540288.

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Howard RD, Howard RS. Shell Shock: The Response of UK Neurology. *Eur Neurol*. 2021 Nov 17:1-7. doi: 10.1159/000519833. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 34788771.

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