



SUMMARY AND COMMENT | PSYCHIATRY, PEDIATRICS AND ADOLESCENT MEDICINE

**INFORMING PRACTICE**

January 10, 2014

## Stop Replaying the Tragedy

*Jonathan Silver, MD reviewing Holman EA et al. Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A 2014 Jan 7.**Watching traumatic events for hours on the media leads to acute stress — even more than being there.*

When a tragic event occurs, many people become glued to the media, which continuously replay the trauma, as with the 9/11 attacks and Superstorm Sandy. These researchers have examined the development of acute stress responses after direct exposure to the Boston Marathon bombing (BMB) in 2013 or after exposure to related media coverage.

Two to 4 weeks after the BMB, the investigators conducted an Internet-based survey about exposure to this and similar events with 846 Boston-area residents, 941 New York City residents, and 2888 people from other parts of the U.S. The questionnaire also assessed acute stress response to the BMB and hours spent on related media content. Among 4652 respondents, almost 10% reported that they or someone close to them were at, injured in, or near the site, and 9% reported that they or a close contact were in the lockdown area. About 26% of participants had direct exposure to 9/11, the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, or Superstorm Sandy.

BMB-related high acute stress was associated with prior mental health problems, 6 or more hours of daily BMB media exposure, and direct exposure to 9/11 and Sandy Hook, but not with direct exposure to Superstorm Sandy or the lockdown. Six or more hours of media exposure resulted in higher stress than direct BMB exposure.

**COMMENT**

Recurrent exposure to a traumatic event appears to reinforce fear circuitry, and replaying of the exact event leaves no possibility for modification of the memory. Although some people find it difficult to pull themselves away from the media, this is an area where we clinicians can prevent the occurrence of emotional problems, especially in our more vulnerable patients [and children](#).

Editor Disclosures at Time of Publication

**CITATION(S):**

Holman EA et al. Media's role in broadcasting acute stress following the Boston Marathon bombings. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A* 2014 Jan 7; 111: 93.  
(<http://dx.doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1316265110>)

[Abstract/FREE Full Text](#)

COMMENT

EMAIL

SHARE

**YOUR COMMENT**

Name \*

Email \*

(will not be published)

Professional Category - None -

Professional Specialty - None -

Place of work

Comment: \*

Do you have any conflict of interest to disclose? Yes

Notify me of follow-up comments via email

This question is for testing whether you are a human visitor and to prevent automated spam submissions.



What code is in the image? \*



ADVERTISEMENT

[About NEJM Journal Watch](#)

[Help & FAQs](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

[Privacy & Cookie Policy](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Product Information](#)

[Specialties & Topics](#)

[Advertisers](#)

[Institutions](#)

[Editorial Policies](#)

[Archive of PDF Issues](#)

[RSS](#)

[Activate Print Subscription](#)

[Subscribe](#)

[Renew](#)

[Create Account](#)

[Sign Up for Email Alerts](#)

[Pay A Bill](#)