

Reports of ICU patients (survivors of severe sepsis or septic shock) who filled in the IESR (Impact of Event Scale – Revised) questionnaire:

We introduced the questionnaire with the following words: ‘In the course of your disease you were treated on our intensive care unit (ICU) for a period of time. It may be that you had traumatizing experiences during your stay, e.g. night mares; strong pain; the feeling of helplessness; or other upsetting experiences.

We would like to ask you to tell us which traumatizing experiences you made during your stay at our ICU:’

Female, 70 years: ‘In June 2003 I had a kidney taken out (tumor). I know that I had a cardiac arrest afterwards. I was unaware that I developed sepsis in addition. Often I had night mares, I did hardly suffer from pain, but I had this feeling of total helplessness. I can’t remember any upsetting situations, only the usual stuff, which is just normal after a difficult operation. However, one day something happened which still makes me angry even today. My mind was already working alright again: They put me in a room together with another woman, all beverages were taken away, nobody took care of us, neither ringing, nor knocking, nor shouting helped. I assume this was the room for the dying. We were cared for properly again the day after. Dying did not work out.’

Male, 56 years: ‘Helplessness, being committed to pain, thought lots about my family, how things could go on, whether I will survive at all.

I have a grandchild, he was about to have his first year at school in 2003, he gave me the strength to make it. My grandchild Matthias visited me together with my wife and my son at the rehabilitation center every weekend. They made me believe that I will make it. All this good support by my family, and friends, and physicians gave me the strength to leave hospital on October, 1st 2003.’

Male, 37 years: ‘Strong pain, everywhere white ants on the walls; on my blanket; on my drinking vessel. I was floating weightlessly in my room, being unable to do anything against it. I heard voices which supposedly were not there. I heard disco noise in the middle of the night. Dizziness, felt like a carousel. Helplessness: being unable to attract attention to myself, or to try to talk to someone but I could not, everybody just passed by and ignored me. Anxiety states, dyspnea, disability to move, strong pain.’

Male, 36 years: ‘After my accident I was in coma for 8 days. After waking up I was confused and could not deal with the situation to be in hospital. I was in this condition for over 2 weeks, they had to tie me to the bed. I can remember hardly anything.’

Male, 69 years: ‘During my 6 weeks stay on ICU I realised my surrounding only very fragmentary. I had very bad night mares most of the time. I was locked in a submarine and could not breathe. I was tiny and had to detect whether bacteria attack the environment. I realised pain only for a short while. I was permanently helpless, which depressed me very much.’