Child Abuse

Center for Youth Wellness, 2014
Data Report - Findings on Adverse Childhood Experiences in California: A Hidden Crisis
Related MedTED talk by Dr. Nadine Burke

Dvir Y, Ford JD, Hill M, Frazier JA.
Childhood maltreatment, emotional dysregulation, and psychiatric comorbidities.
Harv Rev Psychiatry. 2014 May-Jun;22(3):149-61. PMID: 24704784
Review of “emotional regulation and its developmental neurobiology, and examination of the research evidence for associations between childhood trauma, emotional dysregulation, and psychiatric comorbidities in children, adolescents, and adults.”

Lutz PE, Turecki G.
DNA methylation and childhood maltreatment: from animal models to human studies.
Neuroscience. 2014 Apr 4;264:142-56. PMID: 23933308
“DNA methylation (changes to DNA in response to stress) mediates life-long neurobiological effects of childhood maltreatment. Animal and human studies reveal adaptations to early-life adversity.”

Forkey H, Szilagyi M.
Foster care and healing from complex childhood trauma.
“Complex trauma alters immune response, neurodevelopment, and the genome, resulting in predictable and significant cognitive, behavioral, and physical consequences. Pediatric care of children in foster care must be trauma informed to meet their medical, mental health, and developmental needs.”

Taussig HN, Harpin SB, Maguire SA.
Suicidality among preadolescent maltreated children in foster care.
Of 515 maltreated children aged 9-11 years who entered foster care within the prior year, 26.4% had a history of suicidality. Highest risk factors were physical abuse and chronicity of maltreatment.

Jones DJ, Gonzalez M, Ward DS, et. al.
Should child obesity be an issue for child protective services?
Trauma Violence Abuse. 2014 Apr;15(2):113-25. PMID: 24231942
Discussion of recent policy changes to consider childhood obesity an issue of child maltreatment requiring involvement with CPS, including the lack of research to inform this policy.

Flaherty EG, Perez-Rossello JM, Levine MA, Hennrikus WL
Evaluating children with fractures for child physical abuse.
Pediatrics. 2014 Feb;133(2):e477-89. PMID: 24470642
AAP Clinical Report from a group effort of pediatric specialists, child abuse experts, and pediatric radiologists.

Flåm AM, Haugstvedt E. Scott S, et. al.
Early parental physical punishment and emotional and behavioural outcomes in preschool children.
Child Care Health Dev. 2014 May;40(3):337-45. PMID: 23731277
From a Scottish national study, and after controlling for many variables, preschool children exposed to main caregiver “smacking” in the first two years of life were twice as likely to have emotional and behavioral problems at age 4.

Test balloons? Small signs of big events: a qualitative study on circumstances facilitating adults’ awareness of children’s first signs of sexual abuse.
Child Abuse Negl. 2013 Sep;37(9):633-42. PMID: 23899535
In talking retrospectively with 20 non-abusing adult caregivers of children who experienced sexual assault, many children sent up “test balloons” in the form of verbal questions or reservations about some rules or obligations connected to the abuser or activities related to that person.
Adult Manifestations of Child Abuse

Lindert J, von Ehrenstein OS, Grashow R, et. al.  
Sexual and physical abuse in childhood is associated with depression and anxiety over the life course: systematic review and meta-analysis.  
In an analysis of multiple studies including 115,579 participants, “High levels of depression, anxiety and distress are reported in adults exposed to childhood sexual and physical abuse.”

Cambron C, Gringeri C, Vogel-Ferguson MB.  
Physical and mental health correlates of adverse childhood experiences among low-income women.  
For 1073 low income adult women in Utah, “Results demonstrated significant associations between low-income women’s self-reports of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse in childhood, and current and lifetime anxiety disorder, domestic violence, current posttraumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder, physical health or mental health issues...Consistent with research by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, findings suggest the applicability of conceptualizing childhood abuse as a public health issue.”

Fergusson DM, McLeod GF, Horwood LJ.  
Childhood sexual abuse and adult developmental outcomes: findings from a 30-year longitudinal study in New Zealand.  
Child Abuse Negl. 2013 Sep;37(9):664-74. PMID: 23623446  
Following 900 New Zealanders to age 30, childhood sexual abuse was associated with increased risk of mental disorders and sexual risk-taking, and poorer physical health, psychological wellbeing and socioeconomic wellbeing.

Sala R, Goldstein BI, Wang S, Blanco C.  
Childhood maltreatment and the course of bipolar disorders among adults: epidemiologic evidence of dose-response effects.  
J Affect Disord. 2014 Aug;165:74-80. PMID: 24882181  
From a national survey, about half of participants with bipolar disorder had a history of at least one type of childhood maltreatment, and there was a clear dose-response relationship between extent of maltreatment and severity of bipolar characteristics, including co-morbidities, probability of treatment and level of functioning.

Lessard J, Holman EA.  
FKBPs and CRHR1 polymorphisms moderate the stress-physical health association in a national sample.  
Health Psychol. 2014 Sep;33(9):1046-56. PMID: 24099078  
From a national sample of 527 adults, for those with a history of childhood abuse, having a certain type of gene relating to the stress system highly increased the number of physician-diagnosed physical ailments. This was especially true when exposed to adult stress, showing the interaction of genes and environment.

Crosswell AD, Bower JE, Ganz PA.  
Childhood adversity and inflammation in breast cancer survivors.  
Psychosom Med. 2014 Apr;76(3):208-14. PMID: 24632893  
“Childhood adversity was associated with elevated markers of inflammation in breast cancer survivors, with potential negative implications for health and well-being. In particular, chaotic home environment showed unique links with inflammatory outcomes.”

Adolescents

Dick RN, McCauley HL, Jones KA, et. al.  
Cyber dating abuse among teens using school-based health centers.  
From a survey of 1008 teens at school-based health centers, cyber dating abuse was common (44.6% in females and 31.0% in males.) It was associated with physical or sexual dating partner abuse, nonpartner sexual assault, contraceptive nonuse and reproductive coercion.
Bellis MA, Hughes K, Leckenby N, et. al.  
Adverse childhood experiences and associations with health-harming behaviours in young adults: surveys in eight eastern European countries.  
Bull World Health Organ. 2014 Sep 1;92(9):641-55. PMID: 25378755

For young adults from 8 eastern European countries, having at least 4 adverse childhood experiences was associated with increased risk of multiple health-harming behaviors, including an overall 48 times increased risk of suicide attempt.

Luo F, Stone DM, Tharp AT.  
Physical dating violence victimization among sexual minority youth.  

In pooled data including over 62,000 US high school students, sexual minority youth were 2-3 times more likely to experience physical dating violence.

Eaton AA, Matamala A.  
The relationship between heteronormative beliefs and verbal sexual coercion in college students.  
Arch Sex Behav. 2014 Oct;43(7):1443-57. PMID: 24696387

For 555 heterosexual college students primarily of Hispanic origin, the endorsement of heteronormative beliefs (such as the belief that men should dominate women sexually or that men are always ready for sex) “was positively correlated with personal acceptance of verbal sexual coercion strategies and personal experience as the victim and perpetrator of verbal sexual coercion for both men and women.”

Lecic-Tosevski D, Draganic-Gajic S, et. al.  
Child is father of the man: child abuse and development of future psychopathology.  
Psychiatriki. 2014 Jul-Sep;25(3):185-91. PMID: 25367662

Per authors, dysfunctional communication in the family is a significant predictor for DV. “Characteristics of dysfunctional communication include low levels of verbal expressiveness and emotional responsiveness, low tolerance to criticism and its interpretation as a threat or intimidation, and consequently increased anxiety and subsequent escalation of an argument into violence.” This communication dysfunction can be transmitted to children and thus predispose to DV in the next generation.

Domestic Violence – Physical Health

Davis A.  
Violence-related mild traumatic brain injury in women: identifying a triad of postinjury disorders.  
J Trauma Nurs. 2014 Nov-Dec;21(6):300-8. PMID: 25397339

“The purpose of this article is to examine the relationship between physical violence-associated mild traumatic brain injury (MTBI) and post-injury cognitive, emotional, and psychological disorders… Screening for MTBI and the triad of disorders is advocated, and assessment methods are offered.”

de Visser RO, Badcock PB, Rissel C, et. al.  
Sex Health. 2014 Nov;11(5):472-80. PMID: 25377000

From an Australian national telephone survey with over 20,000 participants, 4.2% of men and 22.4% of women reported sexual coercion (being forced or frightened into sexual activity). “Those who had been coerced reported greater psychosocial distress, were more likely to smoke, were more anxious about sex and more likely to have acquired a sexually transmissible infection.” Few talked about this to others or to professionals.
Domestic Violence – Mental Health


In an analysis of female survivors of motor vehicle accidents compared to IPV injury survivors, in both groups equally the presence of PTSD was associated with significantly increased use of pain and psychiatric medication. “Identifying and treating PTSD symptoms following traumatic injury may affect medication usage and improve clinical outcomes in all trauma survivors.”

Elder/Dependent Adult Abuse


In this summary of 70 Portuguese disabled elders, the majority were women with motor disabilities. The most frequently reported type of abuse was physical (86%), allegedly perpetrated by male abusers (63%) living with their victims (90%), who were most commonly their children (47%) or partners (49%); when victims are married. 64% of the time there were multiple injuries, usually of the head and neck (75%).


Article discusses the vague line in Russia between elder abuse and parricide (killing of a parent) such as “involving older people in binge drinking, denying them help, and manipulating them to commit suicide” - often for economic gain.


15.0% of 3,159 Chinese elders living in Chicago reported elder mistreatment. Mistreatment was associated with poorer quality of life and worsening health over the past year.


“Financial abuse by a family member is the most common form of abuse experienced by older Australians,” and this article discusses the difficulties in being able to successfully intervene.

Sexual Assault


For 84 sexual assault survivors followed over time after the event, at 3 months: 60% experienced new or worsening pain symptoms, especially in regions not affected by the trauma; 52% reported common symptoms such as headache, nausea, persistent fatigue; and 47% had developed PTSD.


For 320 women living in the Democratic Republic of Congo, compared to a control group without sexual violence, women who had experienced conflict-related sexual violence were more likely to have fistula (11.1 times more likely), chronic pelvic pain (5.1), lack of desire for sex (3.5) and lack of desire for children (3.5).


Discussion of care of female refugees who may have experienced sexual assault in their conflict country of origin, including sensitive management of their mental and physical health concerns.


Review of the known information about men with military sexual trauma, including prevalence, experiences, and medical and psychiatric sequelae.
Raw quotes from women with a history of sexual assault about feelings and experiences during delivery, and their recommendations for providers.

From a national survey of crime labs, “forensic SANE nurses are highly respected and valued for the quality of their evidence collection.” Some recommendations are made and the pros and cons of a national standardized rape kit are discussed.

Human Trafficking
American Women’s Medical Association
PATH – Physicians Against the Trafficking of Humans Website with educational videos of patient interactions on recognition and management of HT.

Cultural Issues
Review of research related to IPV among migrant and seasonal farm workers, with recommended policies to improve detection, intervention and resources.

Discussion of culturally competent treatment approaches for African American juvenile sex offenders and their families in order to increase engagement in the treatment process.

Perpetrators
“This review provides an overview of current knowledge and understanding of the process of sexual grooming and exploitation of children via the Internet.”

In a small study of 32 male juvenile severe sex offenders, reported rates of bestiality were 37.5% on written survey, but 81.25% with polygraph. Bestiality is theorized to either represent a generalized pattern of sexual behavior involving coercion, control and potential infliction of pain, or the beginning of a progression of behavior from animal to human.

Police and Court Systems
When a representative sample of 250 US adults were given a vignette of an apparently impulsive homicide with 4 explanations (childhood abuse, genetic predisposition, abuse + genetics, or simple impulsive behavior), participants gave the defendants in both childhood abuse categories longer sentences. They did not give the defendants in both genetic categories longer sentences even though they were the most afraid of them.

An analysis of one year of online child pornography trafficking activity on one peer-to-peer network showed that 80% of involved computers shared fewer than 10 files during the year, however ~1% had high traffic, contributing to 30% of activity.
Koss MP.  
The RESTORE program of restorative justice for sex crimes: vision, process, and outcomes.  
J Interpers Violence. 2014 Jun;29(9):1623-60. PMID: 24368680  
Outcome evaluation for 22 cases using RESTORE, a restorative justice program for adult sexual assault. “RESTORE conferences included voluntary enrollment, preparation, and a face-to-face meeting where primary and secondary victims voice impacts, and responsible persons acknowledge their acts and together develop a re-dress plan that is supervised for 1 year.”

Providers

Hahn SA, Postmus JL.  
Trauma Violence Abuse. 2014 Apr;15(2):79-93. PMID: 24346706  
Examination of interventions to economically empower IPV survivors “require the comprehensive and holistic organization of program and service delivery systems.”

Neill KS, Peterson T.  
Perceived risk, severity of abuse, expectations, and needs of women experiencing intimate partner violence.  
Interviews with 43 women regarding their expectations and needs at the time of their partner being arrested for IPV, including feeling upset at how police acted in front of their children, and “Counseling is a wonderful thing, then you are thinking oh my god, how am I going to pay rent. Huge factor in why women go back to their abuser and stay.”

Bianchi AL, McFarlane J, Nava A, et. al.  
Rapid assessment to identify and quantify the risk of intimate partner violence during pregnancy.  
Of 300 women seeking assistance for partner abuse and followed for 7 years, those who experienced abuse during pregnancy were more likely to experience threats, physical violence, and increased risk for homicide. “Abuse during pregnancy not only affects mothers but also impacts future generations. An urgent need prevails to implement policies that will ensure all pregnant women are screened for partner abuse...”

Stover CS, Lent K.  
“A proposed set of standards and training guidelines are proposed for DV advocates, batterer interventionists, and clinicians along with a discussion of the implications of such standards for the field.”

Nicolai MP, Keller JJ, de Vries L, et al.  
The impact of sexual abuse in patients undergoing colonoscopy.  
Anonymous questionnaires returned from patients who had experienced colonoscopy at two Netherlands centers (54% response) showed prevalence of sexual abuse 3.9% for males and 9.5% for females. Those with a sexual abuse history experienced more distress during the procedure, and 43.4% suggested deeper sedation to diminish distress.

Farber BA, Feldman S, Wright AJ.  
Client disclosure and therapist response in psychotherapy with women with a history of childhood sexual abuse.  
Adult clients with a history of childhood sexual abuse were interviewed about the costs and benefits of disclosure. “Significant benefits of disclosing included a sense of relief from sharing bottled-up emotions, and feeling more accepted and understood by one’s therapist; significant negative consequences included feeling emotionally overwhelmed, and feeling uncomfortably vulnerable and exposed.”

Prevention

Godbout N, Briere J, Sabourin S, Lussier Y.  
Child sexual abuse and subsequent relational and personal functioning: the role of parental support.  
Of 348 Canadian adults in stable relationships, 17% reported childhood sexual abuse, with 14% reporting parental intervention after the abuse was
disclosed, 15% lack of parental intervention and 71% parent(s) unaware. Adult survivors who had had supportive parents showed psychiatric symptom patterns and couple adjustment equivalent to non-abused participants. Perceived parental support served as a protective factor. “Positive parental responses to a traumatic event may offer a crucial opportunity to build cognitive models of the self and others that will positively affect later adjustment.”

Researchers

Hamilton HA, Boak A, Mann RE.
Involvement with child protective services: is this a useful question in population-based surveys?
Child Abuse Negl. 2013 Sep;37(9):712-5. PMID: 23838213
Since direct questions on child maltreatment in population-based surveys may be problematic for ethical or methodological reasons, authors suggest asking about involvement with CPS as a reasonable proxy “and serves as a general reflection of an adverse experience.”

Rassenhofer M, Spröber N, Schneider T, Fegert JM.
Listening to victims: use of a Critical Incident Reporting System to enable adult victims of childhood sexual abuse to participate in a political reappraisal process in Germany.
Child Abuse Negl. 2013 Sep;37(9):653-63. PMID: 23796600
In Germany “A media campaign was launched to publicize the establishment of a Critical Incident Reporting System (CIRS) whereby now-adult victims of past abuse could anonymously provide testimonials and let policy makers know what issues were important to them.” This input significantly influenced recommendations to a newly appointed Independent Commissioner to establish new laws and action plans.

Parkinson S, Bromfield L.
Recruiting young adults to child maltreatment research through Facebook: a feasibility study.
Child Abuse Negl. 2013 Sep;37(9):716-20. PMID: 23768931
While Facebook was useful in quickly recruiting a convenience sample of 100 Australian young adults about early life experiences, it resulted in a non-representative sample of higher educated females with an abuse history.

Other of Interest

Salter M.
Multi-perpetrator domestic violence.
Trauma Violence Abuse. 2014 Apr;15(2):102-12. PMID: 24217092
Women and girls who experience multiple perpetrator domestic violence are usually either partnered to members of gangs/organized crime groups, or are members of certain ethnic minority communities with a particular cultural role of masculine honor.

Redmond LW.
Spiritual coping tools of religious victims of childhood sexual abuse.
Surveys of the 20% of students from 3 Christian universities who had experienced childhood sexual abuse revealed their experiences with professional and church based-counseling, coping strategies, and effects on religious practices.

Olema DK, Catani C, Ertl V, Saile R, Neuner F.
The hidden effects of child maltreatment in a war region: correlates of psychopathology in two generations living in Northern Uganda.
J Trauma Stress. 2014 Feb;27(1):35-41. PMID: 24478246
In a study of 2 generations living in camps in severely war-affected regions in Northern Uganda, “We conclude that, even in the context of severe war, the impact of child maltreatment on psychological disorders surpasses the damage of war trauma.”