Child Abuse


For fractures in children < one year of age, the summer season is associated with increased risk of child abuse. [Light grey = non-accidental injury, Dark grey = accidental injury]


For 53 children below the age of 3 with inflicted head trauma, 15.1% also had a cervical spine (neck) injury.


A “second read” of 178 skeletal surveys for suspected child abuse showed rare false-positive, a few false-negative, but for cases read as positive initially, 4.5% of second read showed additional fractures.


17% of children seen in a pediatric neurology outpatient clinic reported 4 or more unexplained symptoms, which were associated with a higher prevalence of ACEs (88% vs. 33% for other children). “These symptoms are likely to be related to a nervous system that has adapted to chronic stress, whereby physiological dysregulation impairs the ability to control and effectively regulate all the functions of the nervous system: emotional processing, sleep-wake cycles, autonomic function, digestion, motor function, and sensory perception... Further, it challenges the intellectual paradigm that psychosomatic symptoms are psychological, or ‘all in the head’, and suggests they are instead the result of a new physiological baseline characterized by dysregulated autonomic circuitry and hormonal responses from chronic stress. A nervous system wired for threat is unable to maintain its important functions for repair, restoration, and health.”


From a large multi-country WHO study, childhood adversities were associated with onset of psychosis (loss of touch with reality, hallucinations, delusions) throughout life, but with a strong association between childhood sexual abuse and psychotic experiences beginning during childhood.
Sibling sexual abuse: why don't we talk about it?

“Sibling sexual abuse accounts for a significant minority of child sexual abuse and has the potential to be as harmful as sexual abuse by a parent. An abhorrence at the thought of sibling sexual activity and a prevailing view of its harmlessness may hinder...detection.”


From a large national survey of children aged 10-17, and after adjusting for multiple variables, the odds ratio of childhood overweight or obesity was independently associated with several ACEs, and especially increased for death of a parent.


In a review of 730 child abuse consultations submitted by 32 child abuse pediatricians, social intuition (meeting a family) and social information (social facts in the case) played a role in physical child abuse decision-making process as a possible bias factor. “Simple interventions including decision tools, check lists, and peer review may structure evaluations to ensure children’s equal treatment.”


From a database of 204,414 children investigated for child physical abuse (CPA), fewer than one in seven were confirmed victims. “Professionally mandated reporters initiated the majority of CPA reports, and their reports were more likely to be substantiated compared with nonprofessionals. However, reports made by even the most accurate professional group (legal/law enforcement) had only a 26% chance of substantiation...More research is warranted to develop and test the effectiveness of training programs to improve CPA reporting and identification.”


Author raises concerns about recent broadened child abuse reporting, including the cost-benefit ratio, overwhelmed services flooded with marginal cases and unable to protect the most vulnerable, no data to indicate increased reporting has led to child safety, disproportional targeting of low income families, the emotional trauma to children from being interviewed and removed temporarily from their families, and fear of reporting preventing families from seeking help.

Adult Manifestations of Child Abuse

“Adversity in early childhood exerts an enduring impact on mental and physical health, academic achievement, lifetime productivity, and the probability of interfacing with the criminal justice system...Our research examines the importance of sex, timing and type of stress exposure, and critical periods for intervention in various brain systems across species.”


Patients with certain blood cancers were significantly more likely to experience distress, depression and anxiety if they had a history of childhood abuse. Authors suggest that understanding this association may explain individual patient responses, and enhance patient-centered care.
Burke NN, Finn DP, McGuire BE, Roche M.  
**Psychological stress in early life as a predisposing factor for the development of chronic pain: Clinical and preclinical evidence and neurobiological mechanisms.**  
Early life adversity, both physical and psychological, increases the risk of developing a number of pain disorders. Authors review the data examining the link between stress/abuse, physiological changes and pain syndromes.

Kumar N, Stowe ZN, Han X, Mancino MJ.  
**Impact of early childhood trauma on retention and phase advancement in an outpatient buprenorphine treatment program.**  
Individuals accessing an opioid treatment program were significantly more likely to drop out during the first 90 days if they had a history of childhood physical or emotional neglect.

**Childhood maltreatment and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder symptoms in adults: a large twin study.**  
Psychol Med. 2016 Sep;46(12):2637-46. PMID: 27376862  
From a large Swedish twin study, childhood maltreatment was significantly associated with adult ADHD symptoms.

**Assessing the contributions of childhood maltreatment subtypes and depression case-control status on telomere length reveals a specific role of physical neglect.**  
J Affect Disord. 2017 Apr 15;213:16-22. PMID: 28187293  
From DNA samples of 80 depressed and 100 control adult subjects, only a history of childhood physical neglect significantly predicted shorter telomere length (a sign of premature cellular aging) – not depression or other forms of child maltreatment.

Agnew-Blais J, Danese A.  
**Childhood maltreatment and unfavourable clinical outcomes in bipolar disorder: a systematic review and meta-analysis.**  
Bipolar disorder affects up to one in 25 individuals. In this research review, patients with bipolar disorder and a history of childhood maltreatment experienced greater severity of mania, depression and psychosis; higher risk of comorbidity with PTSD, anxiety, and substance/alcohol misuse; earlier age of onset; higher risk of rapid cycling; and greater number of manic or depressive episodes and suicide attempts.

Fuller-Thomson E, Baird SL, Dhrodia R, Brennenstuhl S.  
**The association between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and suicide attempts in a population-based study.**  
Child Care Health Dev. 2016 Sep;42(5):725-34. PMID: 27280449  
In a large national study of Canadian adults, childhood physical abuse, sexual abuse and witnessing IPV were each associated independently with increased odds of lifetime suicide attempt. Other risk factors included depression, anxiety, substance abuse and chronic pain.

Westphal M, Leahy RL, Pala AN, Wupperman P.  
**Self-compassion and emotional invalidation mediate the effects of parental indifference on psychopathology.**  
Psychiatry Res. 2016 Aug 30;242:186-191. PMID: 27288737  
From a group of 326 psychiatric outpatients, parental indifference was associated with lower self-compassion and higher emotional invalidation (perceiving others as not caring about one’s feelings). These two factors were then in turn associated with depression, bipolar disorder and PTSD. This suggests that exploration of perceived emotional invalidation and strengthening of self-compassion could influence mental health outcomes of adults who experienced childhood parental indifference.

Howell KH, Cater ÅK, Miller-Graff LE, et al.  
**The relationship between types of childhood victimisation and young adulthood criminality.**  
From a large national sample of Swedish adults, “Experiences of physical assaults, neglect and witnessing violence as a child were significantly associated with adult criminal behaviour.”

Muzik M, Brier Z, Menke RA, Davis MT, Sexton MB.  
**Longitudinal suicidal ideation across 18-months postpartum in mothers with childhood maltreatment histories.**  
J Affect Disord. 2016 Nov 1;204:138-45. PMID: 27344623  
116 women with a history of childhood maltreatment (CM) were followed for 18 months postpartum. Suicidal ideation was higher than for women without a history of CM, remaining at approximately 25% for the duration of the study and was highest a 4 months (37%). 21% of patients first endorsed suicidal ideation one year out from delivery, suggesting that assessment for this risk needs to be more ongoing.
Adolescents

Kacanek D, Malee K, Mellins CA, et. al. 
Exposure to Violence and Virologic and Immunological Outcomes Among Youth With Perinatal HIV in the Pediatric HIV/AIDS Cohort Study. 
For 268 8-15 year olds followed for HIV infection at birth, 34% reported past year violence exposure. Those who reported past year direct or indirect (through caregiver) exposure to violence had significantly elevated odds of unsuppressed viral load and lower white cell count (both measures of worsening HIV infection).

Vivolo-Kantor AM, Olsen EO, Bacon S. 
Associations of Teen Dating Violence Victimization With School Violence and Bullying Among US High School Students. 
Using data from a national CDC teen survey, “Compared to students not reporting TDV [teen dating violence], those experiencing both physical and sexual TDV were more likely to report carrying a weapon at school, missing school because they felt unsafe, being threatened or injured with a weapon on school property, having a physical fight at school, and being bullied on school property.”

Naughton AM, Cowley LE, Tempest V, et. al. 
Ask Me! self-reported features of adolescents experiencing neglect or emotional maltreatment: a rapid systematic review. 
Child Care Health Dev. 2017 May;43(3):348-360. PMID: 28238208 
Review of research linking psychological abuse/neglect of adolescents with problems with mental health, social relationships, and alcohol or substance misuse.

Ihongbe TO, Cha S, Masho SW. 
Age of Sexual Debut and Physical Dating Violence Victimization: Sex Differences Among US High School Students. 
J Sch Health. 2017 Mar;87(3):200-208. PMID: 28147458 
From a national study of 8637 teens, approximately 15% of sexually active students reported past year physical dating violence (PDV) victimization. The odds of PDV victimization among those who had sexual debut at <12 years was 2.46 times increased for girls and 2.20 for boys, compared to those who initiated sex at 16 years and older.

Northridge JL, Silver EJ, Talib HJ, Coupey SM. 
Of 149 sexually active girls aged 14-17 in a high-poverty community, 19% reported reproductive coercion: “most frequently that a romantic or sexual partner had ever: ‘told them not to use any birth control’ (79%); ‘took off a condom during sex so they would get pregnant’ (43%); and ‘said he would leave them if they didn’t get pregnant’ (21%).” Reproductive coercion was associated with increased rates of chlamydia infection, IPV, and lower rates of girls’ recognition of abusive behaviors or communication comfort with their partners.

Domestic Violence – Effects on Children

Chen PH, Rovi S, Vega ML, Barrett T, Pan KY, Johnson MS. 
Birth Outcomes in Relation to Intimate Partner Violence. 
From a random chart review of 1542 pregnant women seen at an urban university prenatal clinic between 2003 and 2009, those with a positive IPV screen were 1.72 times more likely to deliver preterm, 2.03 times more likely to have a low birth weight infant, and those babies were 4.04 times more likely to require intensive care.

Callaghan JEM, Fellin LC, Mavrou S, Alexander J, Sixsmith J. 
From interviews with 107 children aged 8-18 who were exposed to domestic violence at home, they discussed practices of self-silencing and strategies they use to disclose safely. “Children and young people can be articulate, strategic and reflexive communicators, and good support for families struggling with domestic violence must enable space for children and young people's voice to be heard.”
Domestic Violence – Physical Health

Halpern LR, Shealer ML, Cho R, et. al.
Influence of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Exposure on Cardiovascular and Salivary Biosensors: Is There a Relationship?

Of 37 women recruited from a maxillofacial surgery clinic at a dental center in Tennessee, approximately half had a history of IPV. Those with a history of IPV were significantly more likely to report a history of chest pain or palpitations, and saliva testing showed increases in multiple biomarkers for inflammation.

Malik S, Kothari C, MacCallum C, et. al.
Emergency Department Use in the Perinatal Period: An Opportunity for Early Intervention.

From a medical chart review of 678 pregnant patients, 33% had at least 1 perinatal visit to the ED. Women who used the ED were more likely to be adolescent, minority race, Medicaid insured, to smoke or use recreational drugs prenatally, to have experienced IPV, to have delayed entry into prenatal care, to experience postpartum depression, and their infants were nearly twice as likely to be born prematurely.

Domestic Violence – Mental Health

Entilli L, Cipolletta S.
When the woman gets violent: the construction of domestic abuse experience from heterosexual men’s perspective.

From interviews with 20 Italian men who stated that they had been abused by their female partner, “participants showed a protective attitude towards their partners and imputed their violent acts to fragility or an external condition. Emotional distress emerged due to the isolation and subsequent inability to seek help. Although the physical violence reported is severe, the psychological violence was indicated as more damaging.”

Elder/Dependent Adult Abuse

Inside the Black Box: The Case Review Process of an Elder Abuse Forensic Center.

Useful process map of how a case of possible elder financial abuse is assessed and managed.

Lafferty A, Fealy G, Downes C, Drennan J.
The prevalence of potentially abusive behaviours in family caregiving.
Age Ageing. 2016 Sep;45(5):703-7. PMID: 27225014

From a postal survey of 2311 Irish caregivers of elders, with a 58% response rate, 36.8% reported engaging in potentially harmful behaviors toward the elder in the past 3 months.

McGarry J, Ali P, Hinchliff S.
Older women, intimate partner violence and mental health: a consideration of the particular issues for health and healthcare practice.

Review of research on the mental health impact of IPV in elder women, with themes of the longevity of abuse, the changing nature of IPV, and the unspoken and hidden nature of this type of abuse in the interface with healthcare.

Mysyuk Y, Westendorp RG, Lindenberg J.
How older persons explain why they became victims of abuse.
Age Ageing. 2016 Sep;45(5):696-702. PMID: 27220701

Of 17 abused elders, “older victims perceive abuse differently depending on the expected acceptability of the type(s) of abuse experienced and the anticipated stigma associated with the perpetrator involved.” This perception influenced coping strategies and help-seeking behaviors.

Reingle Gonzalez JM, Cannell MB, Jetelina KK, Radpour S.
Barriers in detecting elder abuse among emergency medical technicians.
BMC Emerg Med. 2016 Sep 2;16(1):36. PMID: 27590310

From focus groups with EMTs and APS caseworkers, barriers preventing EMTs from reporting elder abuse to APS included limited training on elder abuse detection or reporting. Besides increased training, EMTs suggested having a brief screening tool as well as an automated reporting instrument to APS for efficiency during their primary role of providing emergency healthcare.
Cultural Concerns

Caballero TM, Johnson SB, Buchanan CRM, DeCamp LR.
Adverse Childhood Experiences Among Hispanic Children in Immigrant Families Versus US-Native Families.

Of 12,162 Hispanic children, 30% of children in US-native families reported high ACEs compared with only 16% of children in immigrant families.
"Children in immigrant families had significantly lower odds of ACE exposure despite higher prevalence of poverty. This may not reflect a true health advantage in this population. There may be unmeasured factors that buffer children in immigrant families from ACE exposure, or ACE questions may not capture the adverse experiences specific to immigrant families."

Warne D, Dulacki K, Spurlock M, et. al.
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) among American Indians in South Dakota and Associations with Mental Health Conditions, Alcohol Use, and Smoking.

Prevalence of ACEs in South Dakota were higher in American Indians (AI) vs. non-American Indians (NAI), with 0 ACEs found in 16.84% of AI vs. 50.02% of NAI, and 6+ ACEs found in 19.28% of AI vs. 3.89% of NAI. Having 6+ ACEs significantly increased the odds for depression, anxiety, PTSD, severe alcohol misuse and smoking compared to 0 ACEs.

Sexual Assault

An observational study of type, timing, and severity of childhood maltreatment and preterm birth.
J Epidemiol Community Health. 2016 Jun;70(6):589-95. PMID: 26957551

From the Nurses' Health Study II, 8% of reported births were premature. Forced sexual activity in childhood or adolescence was associated with a 22% increased odds of preterm birth as an independent risk factor.

Mellins CA, Walsh K, Sarvet AL, et. al.
Sexual assault incidents among college undergraduates:
Prevalence and factors associated with risk.

From an online survey of almost 10,000 undergrads at 2 NY colleges, since college entry, 28% of women, 38% of gender nonconforming students, and 12.5% of men reported at least one incident of sexual assault. The most frequently reported perpetration factor was incapacitation due to alcohol and drug use (>50%). High rates of re-victimization during college were reported across gender groups.

Halstead V, Williams JR, Gonzalez-Guarda R.
Sexual violence in the college population: a systematic review of disclosure and campus resources and services.
Review of research articles analyzing the process of college sexual assault disclosure as well as campus resources and services.

Broken and guilty since it happened: A population study of trauma-related shame and guilt after violence and sexual abuse.
J Affect Disord. 2016 Nov 1;204:16-23. PMID: 27318595
From a telephone survey of 4529 Norwegian adults with a 42.9% response rate, all types of violence were significantly associated with shame and guilt, moreso for women than men. Both emotions led to decreased disclosure, were increased with cumulative number of traumatic events, and were significantly associated with mental health problems including PTSD.

Kimerling R, Makin-Byrd K, Louzon S, et. al.
Military Sexual Trauma and Suicide Mortality.
For women and men, military sexual trauma remained an independent risk factor for suicide even after adjusting for other known risk factors for suicide among Veterans.

Volkmann ER.
Silent Survivors.
First person account of a female physician experiencing rape during residency training.

Human Trafficking

American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement
Global Human Trafficking and Child Victimization
Doherty S, Oram S, Siriwardhana C, Abas M. 
Suitability of measurements used to assess mental health outcomes in men and women trafficked for sexual and labour exploitation: a systematic review. 
Lancet Psychiatry. 2016 May;3(5):464-71. PMID: 27155518

Authors review screening instruments used in research studies to assess mental health of trafficked men and women, and note that “little information was provided about the validity, reliability, and cultural appropriateness” of these tools in this population.

Bick D, Howard LM, Oram S, Zimmerman C. 
Maternity care for trafficked women: Survivor experiences and clinicians’ perspectives in the United Kingdom’s National Health Service. 

Of 48 UK women who had left trafficking, “More than one in four women became pregnant while trafficked, indicating that maternity services offer an important contact point for identification and care...Survivors and clinicians described service challenges, including restrictions placed on women’s movements by traffickers, poor knowledge on how to access maternity care, poor understanding of healthcare entitlements, and concerns about confidentiality.”

Twigg NM. 
Comprehensive Care Model for Sex Trafficking Survivors. 
J Nurs Scholarsh. 2017 May;49(3):259-266. PMID: 28178401

Using interviews with staff from five different residential treatment centers providing services exclusively to domestic minor sex trafficking survivors, a care model was developed to include education, re-entry, family reunification, family reconciliation, and emergency substance use services.

Ostermeyer B, Friedman SH, Sorrentino R, Booth BD. 
Stalking and Violence. 

Review of stalking, including how clinicians can become a victim of stalking as well as stalking by proxy, “a special type of stalking behavior where the stalker involves other people or agencies to communicate with or track their victim.” Stalking assessment and interventions are discussed.

Elliott IA. 
A Self-Regulation Model of Sexual Grooming. 

This model “is founded in control theory and self-regulation approaches to behavior, assumes a goal-directed protagonist, and comprises two distinct phases, namely, (1) a potentiality phase of rapport-building, incentivization, disinhibition, and security-management and (2) a disclosure phase in which goal-relevant information is introduced in a systematic and controlled manner in order to desensitize the target.”

Wood JL, Kallis C, Coid JW. 
Differentiating Gang Members, Gang Affiliates, and Violent Men on Their Psychiatric Morbidity and Traumatic Experiences. 
Psychiatry. 2017 Fall;80(3):221-235. PMID: 29087253

From a UK study of adult males aged 19-34, “Findings showed a decreasing gradient from gang members to gang affiliates to violent men in symptom levels of anxiety, antisocial personality disorder, pathological gambling, stalking others, and drug and/or alcohol dependence. Depression symptoms were similar across groups.”

Police and Court Systems

Knoll JL 4th. 
Understanding Homicide-Suicide. 

Review of known research on homicide-suicide, and a suggested classification system that combines the relationship to the victim(s) and the motivation of the perpetrator. Mass murder/suicide is discussed in depth as are prevention factors.
Providers

Bradbury-Jones C, Clark MT, Parry J, Taylor J.
Development of a practice framework for improving nurses' responses to intimate partner violence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Expression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>'I know about IPV and I may, or may not, be able to see it in practice'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>'I know about IPV, I recognise that it may be happening to you'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>'I know about IPV, I recognise that it may be happening to you and I am confident in how to respond'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

McGarry J.
Domestic violence and abuse: an exploration and evaluation of a domestic abuse nurse specialist role in acute health care services.
"With the growing recognition of the need for adequate support structures to be in place to facilitate practitioners in providing effective care for survivors of domestic violence and abuse...the nurse specialist role facilitated a more cohesive approach to management at an organisational level, with training and ongoing support identified as key facets of the role by practitioners.”

Barrett E, Denieffe S, Bergin M, Gooney M.
An exploration of paediatric nurses' views of caring for infants who have suffered nonaccidental injury.
From interviews with 10 Irish pediatric nurses regarding cases of non-accidental trauma in infants, while striving to maintain professionalism these cases had a personal impact and made communication with the parents difficult. Nurses relied heavily on each other for support. Authors suggest future practice and education needs.

Swail AL, Lehman EB, McCall-Hosenfeld JS.
Intimate partner violence discussions in the healthcare setting: A cross-sectional study.
"IPV screening that does not result in meaningful follow-up discussion and intervention does little to improve the lives of women exposed to IPV.”

Swailes AL, Lehman EB, McCall-Hosenfeld JS.
Intimate partner violence discussions in the healthcare setting: A cross-sectional study.
"IPV screening that does not result in meaningful follow-up discussion and intervention does little to improve the lives of women exposed to IPV.”

Boissonnault JS, Cambier Z, Hetzel SJ, Plack MM.
Prevalence and Risk of Inappropriate Sexual Behavior of Patients Toward Physical Therapist Clinicians and Students in the United States.
Phys Ther. 2017 Nov 1;97(11):1084-1093. PMID: 29077909
From an online survey of 892 physical therapist professionals and students, career prevalence was 84% and 12 month prevalence was 47% of reported inappropriate patient sexual behavior towards providers. Risk factors included having fewer years of direct patient care, routinely working with patients with cognitive impairments, being a female practitioner, and treating male patients.

Van Ouytsel J, Walrave M, Ponnet K, Temple JR.
Digital Forms of Dating Violence: What School Nurses Need to Know.
NASN Sch Nurse. 2016 Nov;31(6):348-353. PMID: 27481477
Review of forms of cyber emotional/psychological and sexual dating abuse, linkage to other forms of abuse, effects on mental and physical health, and role of school nurse in conversations with teens about this issue.
Prevention

Authors detail the mental and physiological effects of abuse on children, and review evidence-based prevention programs at primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

For child maltreatment prevention, “One critical planning task is how to design a public policy framework that can create common ownership of the problem while recognizing the vast differences in individual willingness and capacity to change…it seems prudent to begin building a universal system of assessment and support that will touch all children and all families at multiple points in the developmental process…built on the premise that all parents have issues and concerns and differ only in the extent to which they have the capacity to address these issues.”

Couples expecting their first child and who received a 9 session (5 prenatal and 4 postnatal classes) manualized program “Transition to Parenthood” demonstrated better posttest levels than control couples on more than two thirds of measures of coparenting, parent mental health, parenting, child adjustment, and family violence. Program effects on family violence were particularly large.”

Researchers

Detailed analysis of the two major factors shaping health – obesity and violence – and evidence for contributing factors. “In this new era, child and family health researchers will need to advance models and methods that incorporate a life course and systems perspective...how broader family, school and community systems can be strategically leveraged to influence these trajectories in such a way as to maximize child health and minimize later adult chronic health conditions.”

Other of Interest

“Laws previously understood to protect pregnant women from domestic violence during pregnancy, such as fetal protection laws, now serve as the vehicles for prosecuting pregnant women...More than one-third of states consider pregnant women’s illicit drug use a form of child abuse, resulting in unprecedented forms of criminal and civil punishment.”

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration has released Behavioral Health Barometers for all 50 states that include statistics on substance use, suicide, and serious mental illness by gender, age, income level, health insurance status and race/ethnicity. https://www.samhsa.gov/newsroom/press-announcements/201708101100

Discussion of the implications for women’s health of ongoing changes to the Affordable Care Act, contraception coverage, Planned Parenthood, Title X and other programs, and the need to engage and educate the public on possible outcomes.