

## JOURNAL HIGHLIGHTS

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The purpose of Journal Highlights is to inform readers of current research on various aspects of child maltreatment. APSAC members are invited to contribute by sending a copy of current articles (preferably published within the past 6 months) along with a two- or three-sentence review to Ernestine C. Briggs, Ph.D., Duke University Medical Center, Trauma Evaluation, Research and Treatment Program, Center for Child and Family Health – North Carolina, 3518 Westgate Drive, Suite 100, Durham, NC 27707 (Fax: 919-419-9353).

### SEXUAL ABUSE

#### Randomized Clinical Trial of CBT for Women with PTSD and CSA

This article describes the findings of a randomized clinical trial of individual psychotherapy for women with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) related to childhood sexual abuse (n = 74), comparing cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) with a problem-solving therapy (present-centered therapy; PCT) with a wait-list (WL). CBT participants were significantly more likely than PCT participants to no longer meet criteria for a PTSD diagnosis at follow-up assessments. CBT and PCT were superior to WL in decreasing PTSD symptoms and secondary measures. CBT had a significantly greater dropout rate than PCT and WL. The authors also concluded that both CBT and PCT were associated with sustained symptom reduction in this sample.

McDonagh, A., Friedman, M., McHugo, G., Ford, J., Sengupta, A., Mueser, K., Demment, C., Fournier, D., Schnurr, P. P., & Descamps, M. (2005). Randomized trial of cognitive-behavioral therapy for chronic posttraumatic stress disorder in adult female survivors of childhood sexual abuse. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 73*(3), 515-524.



#### Survey Explores Clinicians' Perceptions of Exposure and Adaptation to Complex Trauma

Complex trauma exposure is the experience of multiple or chronic and prolonged, developmentally-adverse traumatic events, most often of an interpersonal nature (e.g., sexual or physical abuse, war, community violence) and with onset early in life. The Complex Trauma Workgroup of the National Child Traumatic Stress Network conducted a survey in 2002 to assess clinicians' perceptions of the extent and nature of complex trauma exposure and its sequelae in children and families receiving services at network sites. The survey also assessed the types and perceived effectiveness of interventions used with children affected by complex trauma. The results overwhelmingly indicated that complex trauma exposure and posttraumatic adaptation involving impairment in self-regulation were prevalent in children and families served by clinicians working with traumatized patients. These results suggest that mental health professionals need strategies, tools, and protocols for effective assessment and treatment of this population that can be integrated into existing professional practices.

Spinazzola, J., Ford, J. D., Zucker, M., van der Kolk, B. A., Silva, S., Smith, S. F., & Blaustein, M. (2005). Survey evaluates complex trauma exposure, outcome, and intervention among children and adolescents. *Psychiatric Annals, 35*(5), 433-439.

#### Review Explores Empirical Support for Criminal Child Abuse Investigation Practices

This article reviews the research relevant to seven practices widely considered to be among the most progressive approaches to criminal child abuse investigations. They are multidisciplinary team investigations, trained child forensic interviewers, videotaped interviews, specialized forensic medical examiners, victim advocacy programs, improved access to mental health treatment for victims, and Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs). The review found little currently available outcome research to document the success of these practices. However, preliminary research supports many of these practices or has influenced their development. Knowledge of this research can assist investigators and policy makers who want to improve responses to victims, to understand the effectiveness of particular programs, or to identify situations in which assumptions about the effectiveness of an intervention are not empirically supported.

Jones, L. M., Cross, T. P., Walsh, W. A., & Simone, M. (2005). Criminal investigations of child abuse. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse, 6*(3), 254-269.

## PHYSICAL ABUSE

### Perceptions of Child Maltreatment: The Role of SES and Parenting Knowledge and Behaviors

This study examined the perceptions of nurse practitioners who work with low birth-weight children and their parents. Specifically, the investigators examined the relationship between two variables (socioeconomic status, and parenting knowledge and behaviors) and the nurse practitioners' perception of maltreatment. Data regarding the two variables were collected during in-home interviews (N = 891). Multiple interviews were conducted with the participants over a 3-year period. The results indicated that both variables were significantly related to the likelihood that the nurse practitioner would consider a child maltreated. Parenting knowledge and behaviors, however, accounted for more variance than socioeconomic status. The authors suggested that these results demonstrate a need for more comprehensive interventions for these families than are typically offered by the child welfare system.

Berger, L. M., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2005). Socioeconomic status, parenting knowledge and behaviors, and perceived maltreatment of young low-birth-weight children. *Social Service Review*, 79(2), 237-269.

### Impact of Child Maltreatment on Affect Regulation and Information Processing

More research is needed to understand the neurobiological substrates of self-regulation in people who experience early childhood trauma and who have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The concept of self-regulation can provide a basis for theoretical models and interventions that emphasize posttraumatic resilience. To this end, this article sought to 1) identify affect regulation processes that may be influenced by maltreatment during childhood, 2) discuss possible effects of child maltreatment on information processing, and 3) describe the utility of assessing affect dysregulation and information processing when determining psychiatric diagnoses and treatment for people who have experienced childhood maltreatment. The author suggested that future success in developing effective treatments for children and adults who experienced trauma during early childhood is dependent on the continued dialogue between scientists and clinicians who share a focus on the nature, neurobiology, and development of affective and cognitive self-regulation.

Ford, J. D. (2005). Treatment implications of altered affect regulation and information processing following child maltreatment. *Psychiatric Annals*, 35(5), 410-419.

### Black-White Racial Disparity in Child Maltreatment

The goal of this study was to explore possible explanations at the structural level for the racial disparity in child maltreatment rates. Variables examined in the study included poverty rates, areas of concentrated poverty, female-headed households, reporting rates for black families and for white families, and differences in reporting rates. Socioeconomic data were collected from Florida's 2000 census data, and child maltreatment data were collected from the Florida Department of Children and Families. The results found differences in poverty rates and exposure to concentrated poverty, as well as the likelihood of living in a female-headed household, by race, and that these differences can explain some, but not all, of the black-white racial disparity in child maltreatment. The author posited that an increase in the number of programs that focus on reducing poverty in black, female-headed households and reducing those families' exposure to concentrated poverty may decrease some of the overrepresentation of black children in the child welfare system.

Schuck, A. S. (2005). Explaining black-white disparity in maltreatment: Poverty, female-headed families, and urbanization. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67(3), 543-551.



## TST: A New Approach to Treatment for Traumatized Children

Traumatized children frequently live in social environments characterized by domestic violence, child maltreatment, parental mental illness, and substance abuse—conditions demonstrated to be detrimental to child development and to increase the risk of exposure to trauma. This article describes the results of an open trial of an innovative model of care for traumatized children, trauma systems therapy (TST). TST is designed to address both a child's trauma-related symptoms and the perpetuating factors in the social environment.

Saxe, G., Ellis, B. H., Fogler, J., Hansen, S., & Sorkin, B. (2005). Comprehensive care for traumatized children. *Psychiatric Annals*, 35(5), 443-448.

## OTHER ISSUES IN CHILD MALTREATMENT

### Policy Implications of Child Maltreatment Among Homeless Families

This study examined rates of child maltreatment among families who were homeless. The types of maltreatment considered in this study included physical maltreatment, emotional maltreatment, and sexual abuse. The findings indicated high incidence rates of child maltreatment among homeless families. The author discusses the policy implications of these findings.

Pardeck, J. T. (2005). An exploration of child maltreatment among homeless families: Implications for family policy. *Early Child Development and Care*, 175(4), 335-342.

## A Schematic Model for Juvenile Victims in the Juvenile Justice System

This article posited that a de facto juvenile victim justice system currently exists in the form of a complex set of agencies and institutions that respond to juvenile victims of crime and violence, such as child maltreatment and conventional crime. A schematic model of a juvenile justice victim system was proposed that outlines case flow (e.g., likely occurrences in various types of cases, such as what typically happens in a child maltreatment case). The authors argued that more professionals are needed who understand the entire juvenile victim justice system, rather than just one part of the system (e.g., their agency's role), to help integrate the system so that it works more effectively.

Finkelhor, D., Cross, T. P., & Cantor, E. N. (2005). The justice system for juvenile victims: A comprehensive model of case flow. *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse: A Review Journal*, 6(2), 83-102.

### Recent Rulings in Florida on Termination of Parental Rights

This article examined major rulings in the Florida judicial system during 2004 regarding juveniles. Two of these rulings were significant for the child welfare field. One ruling found that the state could not terminate parental rights just because parents had already had their parental rights terminated for another child. Instead, it is the state's responsibility to demonstrate how specific children in question had been harmed by their parents. In a related ruling, the courts found that the state must tie specific parental acts to the child in question in a termination hearing.

Dale, M. J. (2005, Winter). Florida legal affairs: 2004 survey of Florida juvenile law. *Nova Law Review*, 29(Book 2), 395-427.

