Children exposed to trauma should be screened for symptoms of PTSD

Perrin, Sean

Published in:
Evidence-Based Mental Health

DOI:
10.1136/eb-2014-101888

Published: 2014-01-01

Citation for published version (APA):
Perrin, S. (2014). Children exposed to trauma should be screened for symptoms of PTSD. Evidence-Based Mental Health, First published Online, 01 September 2014. DOI: 10.1136/eb-2014-101888
Children exposed to trauma should be screened for symptoms of PTSD

Sean Perrin

Department of Psychology, Lund University, Lund, Sweden; sean.perrin@psy.lu.se

WHAT IS ALREADY KNOWN ON THIS TOPIC?
Children exposed to traumatic events are at increased risk of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); however, the true prevalence of PTSD in non-referred children has been difficult to estimate because of variance in sampling and assessment methods across existing studies of at-risk children and adolescents.

WHAT DOES THIS PAPER ADD?
This is the first study to estimate the prevalence of PTSD in children and adolescents. It does so using a meta-analysis of 72 published studies that employ DSM-IV PTSD criteria and structured diagnostic interviews to assess PTSD in trauma-exposed, non-referred children and adolescents.

The observed PTSD prevalence of 16% is consistent with prevalence estimates obtained for PTSD in adults from large-scale epidemiological studies employing DSM criteria and structured diagnostic interviews.

Further exploration should be made of how trauma type and gender interact to produce a range of psychiatric outcomes including PTSD.


OUTCOMES
Study characteristics Seventy-two studies (n=3563) met inclusion criteria. Age ranged from 2 to 18 years and approximately 57% of participants were male. Participants had been exposed to a variety of events, including motor vehicle accidents, sudden loss of a parent, life-threatening illness, war experiences, domestic violence and child maltreatment. Fifty-one per cent had been exposed to non-interpersonal trauma (eg, accident, natural disaster) and 49% had been exposed to interpersonal trauma (eg, assault, war) or a mix of both. Most samples were from the USA (47%), followed by the UK (12%) and Australia (12%). Studies frequently excluded people with cognitive impairments (58%), insufficient language skills (30%) and current or previous mental health problems (21%). PTSD was most commonly assessed using the Client Administered PTSD Scale (CAPS). The child was the informant in most studies (72%), parents in 9% and a combination for the remainder.

Post-traumatic stress disorder The overall pooled prevalence rate of PTSD in children and adolescents exposed to trauma was 15.9% (95% CI 11.5% to 21.5%). There was significant heterogeneity between the studies, and prevalence rates across the studies ranged from 0.5% to 67.3%.

PTSD by gender The pooled prevalence rate of PTSD following exposure to trauma was significantly less in boys (11.1%, 95% CI 7.0% to 17.1%) compared with girls (20.8%, 95% CI 15.6% to 30.5%).

PTSD following non-interpersonal trauma The pooled prevalence rate was 9.7% (95% CI 6.1% to 15.2%). Boys exposed to this type of trauma showed the lowest rates of PTSD (8.4%, 95% CI 4.7% to 14.5%) compared with girls (13.3%, 95% CI 7.4% to 22.9%).

PTSD following interpersonal trauma The pooled prevalence rate was 25.2% (95% CI 16.8% to 35.8%). Girls showed the highest rates of PTSD (32.9%, 95% CI 19.8% to 49.3%), compared with boys (16.8%, 95% CI 8.8% to 29.6%).
Children exposed to trauma should be screened for symptoms of PTSD

Sean Perrin

Evid Based Mental Health published online September 1, 2014
doi: 10.1136/eb-2014-101888

Updated information and services can be found at:
http://ebmh.bmj.com/content/early/2014/09/01/eb-2014-101888.full.html

These include:

References
This article cites 2 articles
http://ebmh.bmj.com/content/early/2014/09/01/eb-2014-101888.full.html#ref-list-1

P<P Published online September 1, 2014 in advance of the print journal.

Email alerting service
Receive free email alerts when new articles cite this article. Sign up in the box at the top right corner of the online article.

Topic Collections
Articles on similar topics can be found in the following collections

Post-traumatic stress disorder (75 articles)
Epidemiology (1466 articles)
Epidemiologic studies (569 articles)
Competing interests (ethics) (46 articles)
General practice / family medicine (196 articles)

Advance online articles have been peer reviewed, accepted for publication, edited and typeset, but have not not yet appeared in the paper journal. Advance online articles are citable and establish publication priority; they are indexed by PubMed from initial publication. Citations to Advance online articles must include the digital object identifier (DOIs) and date of initial publication.

To request permissions go to:
http://group.bmj.com/group/rights-licensing/permissions

To order reprints go to:
http://journals.bmj.com/cgi/reprintform

To subscribe to BMJ go to:
http://group.bmj.com/subscribe/
Advance online articles have been peer reviewed, accepted for publication, edited and typeset, but have not yet appeared in the paper journal. Advance online articles are citable and establish publication priority; they are indexed by PubMed from initial publication. Citations to Advance online articles must include the digital object identifier (DOIs) and date of initial publication.

To request permissions go to:
http://group.bmj.com/group/rights-licensing/permissions

To order reprints go to:
http://journals.bmj.com/cgi/reprintform

To subscribe to BMJ go to:
http://group.bmj.com/subscribe/