

*Why Family Violence Makes People Sick:
The Health Consequences of Childhood
Abuse and Adversity*

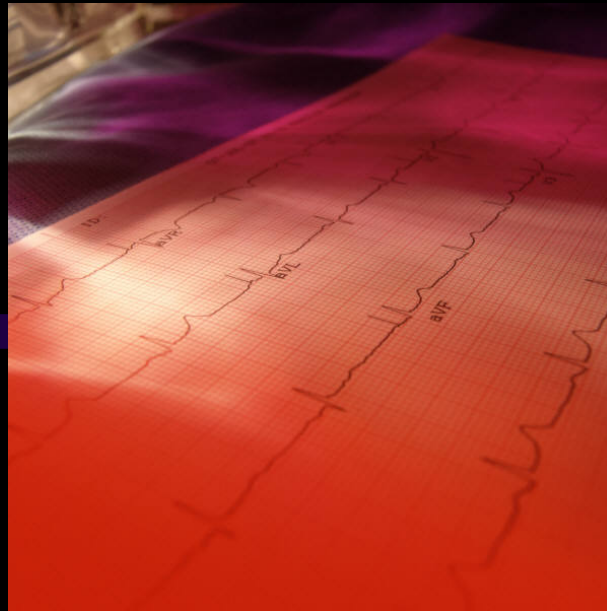


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Family Violence and Health

- **Health problems not related to current injury**
- **Types of abuse include**
 - **Child Sexual Abuse**
 - **Child Physical Abuse**
 - **Child Emotional Abuse**
 - **Witnessing Intimate Partner Violence**
 - **Current IPV/Marital Strife**



Patterns of Healthcare Use



- **Higher rates of healthcare use**
- **Higher healthcare costs**
- **More reported symptoms**
- **More chronic pain syndromes**
- **Overall less satisfaction with their health**

Leading Causes of Death

Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine (2005)

- **Heart Disease**
- **Malignant Neoplasms**
- **Cerebrovascular Diseases**
- **COPD**
- **Diabetes**
- **HIV**
- **Suicide**
- **Chronic Liver Disease and Cirrhosis**
- **Alzheimer's disease**
- **Accidents**
- **Pneumonia/Influenza**
- **Kidney disease**
- **Septicemia**

Diabetes and Abuse (Kendall-Tackett & Marshall, 1999)



- Patients with a history of abuse were significantly more likely to report diabetes or 3 or more symptoms of diabetes
- No significant difference in family history of diabetes, physician-rated obesity, age or ethnicity



Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

(Felitti et al. 1998)

- **Studied 7 types of ACE: abuse (physical, psychological, sexual), exposure to DV, parental mental illness, substance abuse, and criminal behavior**
- **Subjects with 4 or more ACE had higher rates of ischemic heart disease, cancer, stroke, chronic bronchitis, emphysema, diabetes, skeletal fractures, and hepatitis**

Functional vs. Organic GI Illness

- **Study compared health of women with functional vs. organic GI illnesses**
- **60% of the total sample reported physical or sexual abuse**
 - **67% for functional diagnoses**
 - **56% for organic conditions (cirrhosis, hepatitis B & C)** Drossman et al., 1996; Leserman et al., 1996)



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Past Abuse & Back Surgery

- Asked pts. about five types of childhood abuse: CSA, PA, parental substance abuse, abandonment, emotional abuse
- Patients with 3 or more types, the failure rate for back surgery was 85%, compared with 5% among patients with no such trauma (Schofferman et al., 1992)



FMS & Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

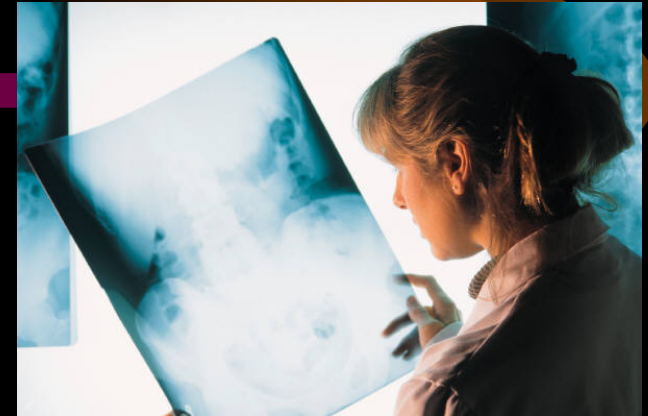
(van Houdenhove et al. 2001)

- **Compared patients with FMS/CFS, RA and MS, and healthy controls**
- **FMS/CFS patients had significantly more hxs emotional and physical abuse**
- **Victimization more severe in FMS/CFS group**
- **Authors state chronic stress may have an etiologic role in CFS/FMS**



Severity Influences Disability and Healthcare Use

- **When all abuse was considered, the amount of variance accounted for was small (1% to 10%)**
- **Severe abuse, in contrast, accounted for:**
 - **63% of variance for days in bed**
 - **74% for number of doctor visits**
 - **231% for lifetime surgeries**



(Drossman et al., 1996)

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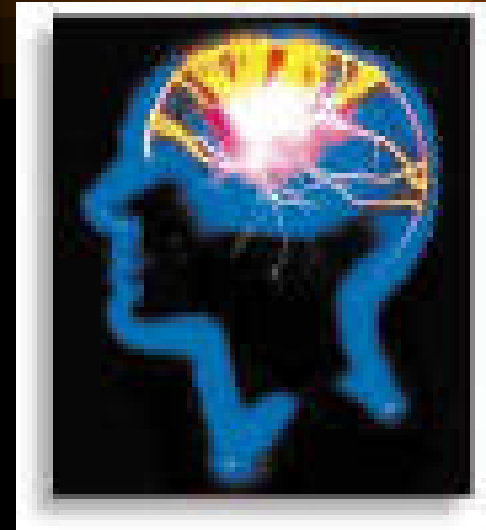
Why Child Abuse Makes People Sick



- **Physiological**
- **Behavioral**
- **Cognitive**
- **Social**
- **Emotional**

Physiological Pathways

- **Trauma changes the body**
- **Chronic hyperarousal**
 - Chronic activation of the SNS
 - Sleep disturbances
 - Depression
 - Lowered pain threshold
 - Increased cardiac reactivity
- **Early trauma rewires the neural networks increasing overall arousal**



Behavioral Pathways

- **Eating Disorders/Obesity**
- **Substance Abuse**
- **Smoking**
- **High-risk sexual behavior**
- **Suicide attempts**
- **Sleep problems**



Smoking and Abuse



- **45% of abused women with PTSD smoked. In contrast, 0% of abused women without PTSD and nonabused smoked (Lemieux & Coe, 1995)**
- **In a study of chronic pain, subjects who were abused as children or adults were significantly more likely to smoke (46% vs. 18%) (Scarinci et al., 1994)**
- **Women with a history of child sexual abuse were more likely to smoke during pregnancy (Grimstad & Schei, 1999)**

Abuse and Sleep



- **In a community sample, 68% of sexual abuse survivors reported having sleep difficulties, with 45% having repetitive nightmares (Teegen, 1999)**
- **In a primary-care sample (Hulme, 2000),**
 - **52% of sexual abuse survivors reported that they could not sleep at night (24% of NA)**
 - **36% reported nightmares (13%)**
 - **53% reported intrusive symptoms sudden thoughts or images of past events (compared with 18%)**

Cognitive Pathways I: Beliefs About Self

- **Shame/self-blame**
- **Attributional style**
- **Self-efficacy**
- **Health perception**
- **Health locus of control**



CSA and Pessimism

- **In a community sample, approximately half of the sexually abused women described their current views toward life, themselves and others as very negative (Teegen, 1999)**



Attributional Style and Health



- **In a study of law students, optimism was associated with**
 - Better mood
 - Higher number of T cells
 - Higher NK cell cytotoxicity
- **In HIV positive men, pessimism was related to a faster the decline in CD4 count**
 - Controlled for CD4 at baseline, depression, health behavior, sexual practices or partner status (Segerstrom et al., 1996; 1998)

Self-Efficacy



- **Feelings of competence**
- **People are less likely to persist unless they believe that they can produce a desired outcome by their own actions**
- **Important predictor of health behaviors**
- **In a study of pediatric asthma, maternal self-efficacy was significantly related to child's morbidity, including the number of days children missed school (Grus et al., 2001)**

Cognitive Pathways II: Beliefs about Others

- **Internal Working Model**
- **Mistrust and Hostility**
- **Rejection Sensitivity**
- **Religiosity**



Mistrust and Hostility



- **In a sample from primary care, 52% of sexual abuse survivors indicated that they could not trust others compared with 17% of the non-abused women (Hulme, 2000)**



Hostility and CHD

- **Hostile people are more prone to ischemia and constriction of coronary arteries when under stress**
- **Trait hostility predicted new coronary events**
- **And sped up the progression of CHD in patients who already have it**
(Smith & Ruiz, 2002)



Hostility and Metabolic Syndrome

- **Sample of 134 white and African American teens**
- **3 year follow-up**
- **Hostility at T1 predicted at least 2 risk factors for metabolic syndrome at 75th percentile for age, gender and race**
 - **BMI, insulin resistance, ratio of triglycerides to HDL cholesterol, and mean arterial blood pressure (Raikkonen, Matthews & Salomon, 2003)**

Rejection Sensitivity

- **When people expect others to reject them, they develop rejection sensitivity**
- **This is a tendency to**
 - **Anxiously expect**
 - **Readily perceive**
 - **And overreact to rejection**

(Downey et al., 1998)



Rejection Sensitivity and Health

- **Study of HIV+ gay men (Cole et al., 1997)**
- **Those high in rejection sensitivity**
 - **Had a faster decline in CD4 counts**
 - **A more rapid progression to AIDS**
 - **Died sooner of AIDS-related complications**



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Social Pathways

- **Insecure Attachments**
- **Poor Quality of Current Relationships**
- **Divorce**
- **Social Isolation**
- **Co-Dependent Style**
- **Low Income**
- **Homelessness**
- **Revictimization**



Breakdown of Social Relationships

- **In an Australian study, CSA women were more likely to be divorced or separated, have an alcoholic partner and report dissatisfaction with their current relationship (Fleming et al., 1999)**



CSA and Family Relationships

- **Longitudinal study, Avon, UK (N=8292)**
- **After adjusting for ACEs, CSA women**
 - **More likely to be single mothers or cohabitating**
 - **Reported less satisfaction with current relationship and poorer communication**
 - **More likely to have children with hyperactivity, conduct problems, peer or emotional problems (Roberts et al., 2004)**

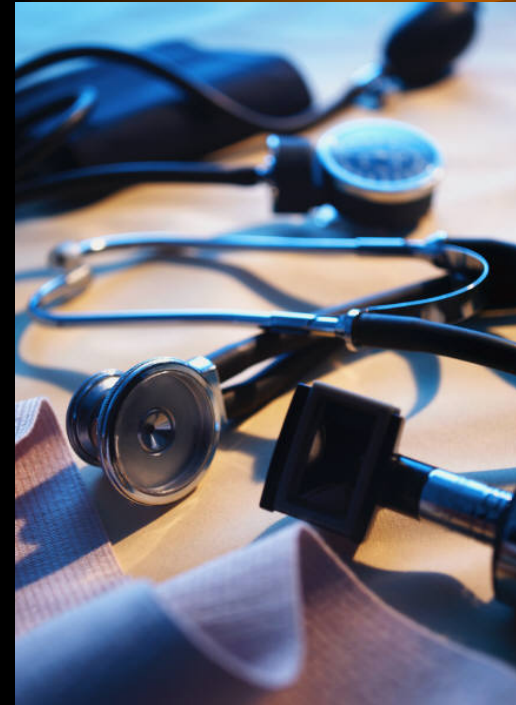
Impact of Abuse & Neglect on Adult Relationships (Colman & Widom, 2004)

- **Prospective study of 1196 adults (676 CAN)**
- **Abuse/neglect survivors had higher rates of**
 - **Cohabitation, walking out, and divorce**
 - **Relationship dysfunction**
 - **Sexual unfaithfulness (females only)**



Health Impact of Marital Strife

- **Marital strife can influence health via cardiovascular, endocrine, immune and neurosensory mechanisms**
- **Effects of marital strife especially strong for women (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001)**



Marital Strife and Lipid Profiles

- **Women in unsatisfying relationships had an increase in cardiovascular risk over 13-year study**
 - **Poor quality marriage related to low HDL, high triglycerides, and also influenced BMI, blood pressure, depression and anger (Gallo et al., 2003)**



Revictimization

- **In a European community sample of CSA survivors**
 - **41% had experienced sexual violence one or more times in relationships, at work or in therapy** (Teegen, 1999)



Revictimization

- **Study of American college women**
- **Child sexual abuse, child emotional abuse, low family cohesion, and low emotional expressiveness all predicted adult rape (Messman-Moore & Brown, 2004)**



Emotional Pathways



- **Depression**
- **PTSD**



CSA and Depression

- **CSA women were three times more likely to be depressed than non-abused women in a sample of low-income women (Zuravin & Fontanella, 1999)**
- **A lifetime prevalence of major depression was 86% in sexual abuse survivors with PTSD, and 29% of these women were currently depressed (Bremner et al., 1997)**

Depression and Health

- **Increased risk of MI**
- **Suppressed immune system**
 - Lower levels of CD4, CD8, CD56+, CD+16
- **Decreased health behaviors**
- **Co-morbid substance abuse**
- **Less support in social relationships**



PTSD and Health

- **High rates of co-morbid substance abuse, chronic pain, and depression**
- **Also associated with sleep difficulties and marital disruptions**



PTSD and Pregnancy Complications



- **Large sample of women with and without PTSD** (Seng et al., 2001)
- **Women with PTSD had significantly higher odds ratios for**
 - **Ectopic pregnancy**
 - **Spontaneous abortion**
 - **Hyperemesis**
 - **Preterm contractions**
 - **Excessive fetal growth**

Trauma History



- **Representative sample (N=2,181)**
- **History of trauma associated with greater risk of PTSD from the index event**
- **Multiple traumas increased risk more than a single trauma**
- **Assaultive trauma, in childhood or later on, was particularly damaging**
- **Previous major depression can also predispose people to PTSD (Breslau et al., 1997)**

PTSD in Old Age



**Studies of aging
Holocaust survivors
suggest that illness
and disability
associated with old
age may be
exceptionally
difficult for people
with prior PTSD
(Solomon & Ginzburg, 1999)**



Implications

- **Childhood abuse can trigger a cascade of behaviors, thoughts and emotions that can all influence health**
- **These will vary for each individual patient**
- **We must be careful not to either ignore these experiences or think that all health problems are caused by them**

We have seen that women with a history of sexual or physical abuse have considerable contact with the medical care system.....Violence against women is not just a problem of the criminal justice system; it is one of the primary health problems facing women today

Leserman & Drossman, 1995, p. 73

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