Examination of Adverse Childhood Experiences in Two Populations of Children Receiving Mental Health Services

Symposium Introduction

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The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study

- Collaboration between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Kaiser Permanente
- Examined the relationship between health / behavioral outcomes of adult Kaiser Permanente patients and nine types of childhood trauma (reported retrospectively)
- Calculated an Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) score as the number of different types of trauma experienced by children

Original ACE Score Categories

- Abuse
  - Emotional
  - Physical
  - Sexual
- Household dysfunction
  - Mother treated violently
  - Substance abuse
  - Imprisonment
  - Mental illness
  - Not raised by both biological parents
- Neglect
  - Physical
  - Emotional

ACE Study Summary of Findings

- About two-thirds of participants reported at least 1 adverse childhood experience
- More than 1 in 5 participants reported three or more adverse childhood experiences
- Increasing ACE scores are related to
  - early initiation of smoking, sexual activity, illicit drug use, adolescent pregnancies, HIV and STDs, and suicide attempts during childhood and adolescence
  - increased risk of heart disease, chronic lung disease, liver disease, and other risks for the leading causes of death
  - increased number of comorbid conditions

ACE Study Summary of Findings (cont.)

- Conclusions:
  - adverse childhood experiences affect later health and well-being
  - degree of effect depends in part on degree of trauma experienced
- Findings imply that prevention of, and early intervention for, traumatic experiences would be beneficial.

Relationship Between Trauma Experienced by Children and Their Mental Health Outcomes

- Research on children’s experiences with traumatic stress – degree of emotional and behavioral problems is related to experiencing multiple vs. single traumatic events
- Children and youth experiencing maltreatment are at greater risk for significant problems later in life
Two Populations of Children Studied

- CMHI Population: children with serious mental health needs
- NCTSI Population: children who have experienced trauma

- CMHI: Children's Mental Health Initiative
- NCTSI: National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative