CHILD ABUSE, PREVENTION AND THE CLIMATE OF COVID-19

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CLOVID-19 IS A MULTI-PRONG DISASTER

• Health. It hurts and kills. Only wars such as WWII and the Civil War have killed more Americans (so far)
• Economic. Recessions. Serious physical abuse tends to increase.
• We know it these will happen, but do we increase resources for intervention, management, and most importantly, prevention?

EFFECTS OF DISASTERS AND RECESSIONS ON CHILD ABUSE RATES

Hurricanes
Fourteen months after a hurricane, young children who had experienced the storm showed significantly higher anxiety and withdrawal and more behavior problems than did children who had not. Behavioral problems decreased steadily over the six months following the storm. Mothers’ distress in the hurricane’s aftermath was associated with the longevity of their children’s emotional and behavioral difficulties.

EFFECTS OF DISASTERS AND RECESSIONS ON CHILD ABUSE RATES

Hurricanes and earthquakes
Based on analyses of numbers, rates, and proportions, child abuse reports were disproportionately higher in the quarter and half year following two of the three disaster events (Hurricane Hugo and Loma Prieta Earthquake, but not Hurricane Andrew).

AHT INCREASING – MAYBE BECAUSE OF UNEMPLOYMENT

• 442 children diagnosed with AHT from January 2004 to June 2009 for 3 geographic areas (74 counties)
• Ohio area
• Pennsylvania area
• Washington state area
• Mean age = 8.9 months
• 76% under 1 year old

AHT INCREASING – MAYBE BECAUSE OF UNEMPLOYMENT

• Recession defined as December 1, 2007 through June 30, 2009
• Rate of AHT increased from 8.9 per 100,000 before the recession to 14.7 per 100,000 during the recession
• No relationship between AHT and county-level unemployment rates
**AHT INCREASING – MAYBE BECAUSE OF UNEMPLOYMENT**

- Conclusions
  - Increased AHT during 19 months of recession vs. 47 months before
  - Stress of recession may be linked to violence
  - Recession may have policy implications regarding numbers affected, morbidity and mortality, and costs
  - Prevention should be increased during times of economic hardship

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**EFFECTS OF DISASTERS AND RECESSIONS ON CHILD ABUSE RATES**

**Recession**


Examined abusive head trauma (AHT) incidence before, during and after the recession of 2007–2009 in 3 US regions and assessed the association of economic measures with AHT incidence.

**Recession**


Data for children <5 years old diagnosed with AHT between January 1, 2004, and December 31, 2012, in 3 regions were linked to county-level economic data. Associations between county-level AHT rates and recession period as well as employment growth, mortgage delinquency, and foreclosure rates were examined.

**Recession**


During the 9-year period, 712 children were diagnosed with AHT. The mean rate of AHT per 100,000 child-years increased from 9.8 before the recession to 15.6 during the recession before decreasing to 12.8 after the recession. The AHT rates after the recession were higher than the rates before the recession (incidence rate ratio 1.31, $P = .004$) but lower than rates during the recession (incidence rate ratio 0.78, $P = .005$). There was no association between the AHT rate and employment growth, mortgage delinquency rates, or foreclosure rates.

**Recession**


In the period after the recession, AHT rate was lower than during the recession period yet higher than the level before the recession, suggesting a lingering effect of the economic stress of the recession on maltreatment risk.

**Recession**


For 5 years before and during the recession we also saw nearly a doubling of AHT.

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**EFFECTS OF DISASTERS AND RECESSIONS ON CHILD ABUSE RATES**

**Recession**


Florida CPT data

For 5 years before and during the recession we also saw nearly a doubling of AHT.
The week of 9/27 – 10/3 saw a 1.91% decrease in total intakes received compared to the previous week (9/20 – 9/26). There was a 6.5% increase in the number of Child Program intakes generated. CPM Program intakes volume for the week of 9/27 – 10/3 was 4,275 lower than it was during the comparable week in 2019.

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Indicators that continue to remain relatively consistent, with the following maltreatment identified as the top eight most frequently called maltreatment during the week of 9/27 – 10/3. During the week of 9/27 – 10/3, there was a 19% increase compared to the previous week. The following changes in frequency were identified during the week of 9/27 – 10/3, compared to the previous week (9/20 – 9/26). Early March (week of 3/1 – 3/7), and the comparable week of 2019:

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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>164</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>427</td>
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<tr>
<td>Substance Exposed Newborn</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>42%</td>
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<td>457</td>
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<td>362</td>
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<td>1,247</td>
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Child abuse reports were significantly lower immediately before the first week of March 2020.

Overall intakes have rebounded to pre-COVID-19 levels.

**SUMMARY OF DCF DATA**

- Duval county has the highest number of intakes in Northeast Region.
- Inadequate Supervision, physical injury and household violence were top maltreatments 9/27 – 10/26.
- Law Enforcement officials are the highest for reporter type.
- Child abuse reports were significantly lower immediately before the first week of March 2020.
- The highest number of reports alleging inadequate supervision and physical injury occurred during the first week of March 2020.
WHAT IS HAPPENING IN REALITY?

- Official statistics capture 1 of every 3 – 5 instances of child abuse anyway
- Children are being abused now that we never hear of, or will years from now
- There may be an increase in child abuse that we don’t know about, and won’t for decades

WHY MIGHT CHILD ABUSE RATES INCREASE IN TIMES OF STRESS?

ACCESS

- One supposition is that parents might be home more than before and that children have more exposure to them
- More hours of contact increases the chance that there will be a negative interaction (e.g. someone gets on someone’s nerves)
- Solution is not to take a vacation, ship away on a submarine, etc.

WHY MIGHT CHILD ABUSE RATES INCREASE IN TIMES OF STRESS?

CHILDREN DON’T HAVE AS MANY OUTLETS

- Not as much daycare or school – teachers don’t have the opportunity to report
- They may not be outside as much – more underfoot
- If schooled at home, that could add a stress to the parents

WHY MIGHT CHILD ABUSE RATES INCREASE IN TIMES OF STRESS?

PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS

- Worry about getting sick or dying
- Restrictions to former lifestyles
- Media intensity on a variety of issues

WHY MIGHT CHILD ABUSE RATES INCREASE IN TIMES OF STRESS?

INSECURITIES

- Employment
- Food insecurity
- Housing
- Family

CHILD ABUSE ISSUES

- Misunderstood normal development
- Dysfunctional learned parenting styles
- ACEs
OBJECTIVE. Examine the temporal association between school report card release and incidence of physical abuse.

DESIGN. Retrospective review of calls to the Florida child abuse hotline and school report card release dates across a single academic year.

PARTICIPANTS. Children aged 5-11 years in the state of Florida for whom calls to the state child abuse hotline were made.

EXPOSURES School report cards release across a single academic year, measured daily.

MAIN OUTCOMES and MEASURES DCF verified incidents of physical abuse across a single academic year, measured daily.

- During the academic year, approximately 168,000 calls came in to the child abuse hotline for children aged 5-11 years
- 18% of these calls were suspected incidents of physical abuse
- 7% were verified as cases of physical abuse.

- Calls resulting in verified reports of physical abuse were more prevalent on Saturdays following a Friday report card release compared to the overall average across all release days (OR = 8.75, 95% CI = 2.09 – 15.85)
- As well as compared to Saturdays that do not follow a Friday report card release (OR = 5.57, 95% CI = 1.94 – 15.95).
**REPORT CARDS AND PHYSICAL ABUSE**

- A potentially actionable opportunity for reducing the incidence of physical abuse linked to report cards.
- Illustrates the important role that systems may play in the epidemiology of physical abuse.

**RESEARCH HAS SHOWN OTHER TEMPORAL ASSOCIATIONS**

- More cases in spring and summer months than in autumn and winter
- More physical abuse-related visits to the hospital in the afternoon to evening hours, and more physical abuse-related hospital admissions during weekdays
- One study of children in China found peaks in physical abuse-related hospital admissions in two months preceding school examination periods

**OTHER SYSTEM EFFECTS ON ABUSE**

- Gas price increases are positively associated with increases in child abuse.
- Specifically, a $1 increase in gas prices within a state was associated with 642 additional child abuse reports per 100,000 children

**OTHER SYSTEM EFFECTS ON ABUSE**

- States which instituted refundable earned income tax credits (EITC) demonstrated a trending decrease of admissions for abusive head trauma in children
- Nonrefundable earned income tax credits (EITC) were not associated with a decrease in abusive head trauma.

**SYSTEM EFFECTS ON ABUSE**

- The importance of a systems approach to child abuse will grow in importance as a means of prevention
- Ultimately, social norms change will be key
**NO HIT ZONES**

- Toolkit: [https://nohitszone.com/](https://nohitszone.com/)
- Concept is like No Smoking
- Goal is social norms change

**Hit Free Zone**

**Purpose:**
To create and reinforce an environment of comfort and safety for patients, families and staff working at our facility.

**Hit Free Zone, an environment in which:**
- No adult shall hit a child
- No adult shall hit another adult
- No child shall hit an adult
- No child shall hit another child

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**ELDER ABUSE**
Stoughton, WI
- City Council unanimously passed a “No Hit Zone” resolution for all city buildings.
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J6Xjs6xXpSo

Madison Heights, MI
- no spanking at 10 city-owned properties
- all designated as “no hit” zones.

## No Hit Cities

1. Dane County WI Prosecutor’s Office
2. Jacksonville FL Medical Examiner’s Office
3. All catholic schools in New Orleans
4. County health departments around Norfolk VA
5. All Child Advocacy Centers in Florida
6. First Coast Child Protection Team – 8 counties in FL

### BEYOND HOSPITALS: SEVERAL EXAMPLES

1. Dane County WI Prosecutor’s Office
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## TEXT4BABY

- Project by CDC, NIH, AAP, and many others
- Text messages sent 3 times per week geared to your baby’s age. Only enroll once.

  - Text messages are free thanks to the CTIA Wireless Foundation and participating mobile phone companies: Alltell, Assurance Wireless, AT&T, Bluegrass Cellular, Boost Mobile, Cellcom, Cincinnati Bell, Cricket, MetroPCS, nTelos, Sprint, T-Mobile, U.S. Cellular, Verizon Wireless, and Virgin Mobile USA.
TEXT4BABY

- Nutrition for you and your baby
- Safe sleep tips
- Baby’s milestones
- Signs and symptoms of labor
- Doctor visit and appointment reminders for you and your baby
- Breastfeeding advice
- Car seat safety
- Information on health insurance
- Urgent health alerts
- Resource hotlines and websites

https://www.text4baby.org/

TAKE 5

- Long term project from Yale
- Teaches adults in newborn unit to walk away for 5 minutes
- Five steps to manage caregiver frustration with infant crying and to prevent a caregiver from hurting an infant
- Recent study showed a reduction in abusive head trauma in those who were in the program
- Infants whose caregivers received Take 5 were 79 per cent less likely to have suffered AHT


ACEs IN CLINICAL PRACTICE

- RJ Gillespie MD in Portland Oregon uses the adult’s ACE score to help determine who needs community services
- Adds no significant time to pediatric visit
- High satisfaction by parents
- California ACEs Academy teaching over 1000 physicians about ACEs

RJ Gillespie, Folger A. Feasibility of Assessing Parental ACEs in Pediatric Primary Care: Implications for Practice-Based Implementation. *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma*. 2017. 10: 246-256

Steps/HIGH RISK NEWBORN PROGRAMS

ADOPTING A DAILY GROUNDING PRACTICE

RJ Gillespie, Folger A. Feasibility of Assessing Parental ACEs in Pediatric Primary Care: Implications for Practice-Based Implementation. *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma*. 2017. 10: 246-256

*Free webinar with CME credits at the Academy of Violence and Abuse website: [https://www.aacn.org/resources/california-ace-academy](https://www.aacn.org/resources/california-ace-academy)*