

Abstract

Title: Childhood Trauma and Its Impact on Mental and Somatic Health in Adulthood

Psychological trauma is a generic term referring to any stressful life event that causes someone discomfort and at the same time surpasses the individual's coping resource. It can include experiences of bullying, neglect, physical, psychological, emotional or sexual abuse, or the presence of any traumatic life event such as accidents, disasters, illness diagnosis, mobbing at work or loss of loved one. Although psychological trauma can occur at any point over the life span, when traumatic events are experienced in childhood, these have been shown to have a harmful impact on an array of health conditions with a strong negative neurobiological impact. Trauma during childhood can disrupt normal brain development, affect emotional regulation and interpersonal relationship and lead to maladaptive coping mechanisms. A wealth of data shows that traumatic experiences in childhood are highly prevalent, and can have far-reaching consequences, with numerous studies showing a strong association between psychological trauma and the onset of individual mental disorders. The evidence implicating psychological trauma in a range of mental and somatic disorders suggests it could be a transdiagnostic risk factor, whereas in this presentation best current evidence will be highlighted via various recent meta-analysis. These provide solid insight into the role of childhood trauma and mental and somatic disorders in adulthood. Traumatic events contribute also to the severity of the mental disorders and worsen their course of the illness. Furthermore, childhood trauma has a strong negative social impact, favours criminal behaviour and is also considered as a risk factor for somatic disorders, such as cardiovascular diseases, autoimmune diseases, or obesity. Therefore, it can be considered as a risk factor for mental, psychosocial and somatic health in general. Beyond urgently needed national and international prevention programs for childhood trauma, psychiatric services should offer our patients -within a personalized treatment plan- trauma-focused interventions to at least ease the short- and long-term sequelae of psychological trauma.