

Relationship between traumatic events in childhood and chronic pain

Disabil Rehabil. 1999 Jan;21(1):23-30.
Goldberg RT, Pachas WN, Keith D.

PURPOSE: The purpose was to examine the relationships between traumatic events in childhood, such as sexual and physical abuse, alcoholism, and drug addiction, and three types of chronic pain: facial pain, myofascial pain, and fibromyalgia. A fourth group, a heterogeneous group of other pain, was used as a comparison group.

METHODS: Ninety one patients with chronic pain, age range 20-60, were consecutively recruited from the outpatient clinics of a rehabilitation hospital and a general hospital. Patients were given four measures for completion at evaluation: Childhood History Questionnaire; Childhood Traumatic Events Scale; McGill Melzack Pain Questionnaire; Pain Disability Index. Chi-square was used to test significant differences among four pain groups on sexual, physical, and verbal abuse; alcoholism; drug dependence; medications; major upheaval, childhood illness, death of a family member or friend, and separation or divorce of parents. Logistic regression was used to predict membership in the four pain groups.

RESULTS: All pain groups had a history of abuse exceeding 48%: fibromyalgia, 64.7%; myofascial, 61.9%; facial, 50%; other pain, 48.3%. All groups had a history of family alcohol dependence exceeding 38%, and a history of drug dependence ranging from 5.8 to 19.1%. A combined history of pain, child physical abuse, and alcoholism was prevalent in 12.9 to 35.3%. Logistic regression showed patients who were female, with an alcoholic parent, using non-narcotic drugs were more likely to be members of the facial, myofascial, and fibromyalgia groups.

CONCLUSION: Child traumatic events are significantly related to chronic pain. Since the problem of child abuse is broader than physical and sexual abuse, health and rehabilitation agencies must shift from individualized treatment to interdisciplinary treatment of the family and patient.