

EDITORIAL

Childhood maltreatment and health outcomes

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Childhood maltreatment has been recognized as a widespread problem across the globe.¹ Data from North America have shown higher annual health care utilization and costs for women with vs. without a history of child abuse.² Specifically, annual health care costs were 36% higher for women who had experienced both physical and sexual child abuse. Feng et al. found that the economic burden of child maltreatment in the United States was US\$ 585 billion in just 1 year,³ and US\$ 194 billion in the East Asia and Pacific region, accounting for 1.36 to 2.52% of the region's GDP.⁴

In addition to representing an economic burden, childhood abuse and neglect are important risk factors for a range of mental disorders, including addiction and suicide, as well as for sexually transmitted infections and risky sexual behavior.⁵

Regarding biological mechanisms linked to the effects of early adversity on poor health outcomes, there is consistent evidence indicating that accelerated biological aging may play an important role,⁶ including in groups with substance use disorders.⁷

The present issue of the *Brazilian Journal of Psychiatry* brings three important articles in the area of childhood maltreatment in the context of low and middle-income countries. Shamohammadi et al.⁸ explored the prevalence of maltreatment and found a relatively low frequency (7.1%) of trauma symptoms among 11-12 year old children from Iran. In Brazil, Diehl et al.⁹ examined adult patients seeking treatment for drug abuse and found a high prevalence of reported physical and sexual abuse, as well as an association between childhood maltreatment and later risky sexual behavior in adulthood. Novel data from Colombia, presented by Jimenez et al.,¹⁰ are used to explore for the first time the association among telomere length, childhood trauma, and depressive symptoms in a Latin American sample, suggesting a moderate correlation between telomere length and scores of sexual abuse in the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire. Such a diverse perspective provides readers with a valuable opportunity

to broaden and deepen their knowledge of the field of childhood maltreatment.

Disclosure

The author reports no conflicts of interest.

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