

Title: Comparing adverse childhood experiences (ACE) of parents of children in treatment in outpatient psychiatry to adults in the general population.

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Hypothesis: We hypothesized that parents of children requiring psychiatric services were more likely to have experienced more adversity during childhood than adults in the general population.

Study design: A modified Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Questionnaire about adverse childhood experiences was administered to parents of children receiving treatment at the UCH pediatric psychiatry outpatient setting over the course of four months from September 2019 to December 2019. Scores were compared to 2014 data from the Colorado Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System and Child Health Survey (BRFSS), a federally funded random health telephone survey of residents 18 or older. Data was analyzed using SPSS v27. Pearson Chi-Square crosstabs were run for each ACE question, comparing the UCH Psychiatry group with the BRFSS data.

Results: As children, parents of children at the UCH clinic were more likely to have lived with someone who was depressed, mentally ill, or suicidal ($p < 0.001$), have parents who were separated or divorced ($p = 0.004$), been physically hurt by a parent or adult at home ($p = 0.029$), been verbally harmed ($p = 0.002$), coerced to touch an adult sexually ($p = 0.021$), and/or forced to have sex by an adult ($p = 0.020$). Due to sample size, no significant difference was found between the average ACE score for parents at the UCH clinic and the general population.

Conclusions: Parents of children receiving psychiatric services have been exposed to more traumatic and stressful events during childhood than parents in the general population. This finding from our small study provides further evidence for the intergenerational transmission of stress and trauma, supporting the importance of caregiver involvement in the mental health care of children.