Having New Eyes: Viewing Violence Against Children as a Public Health Problem

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How Common Is Violence Against Children?

In 2008, 1,943 CHILDREN DIED as a result of HOMICIDE
= 5 children died every day
= 77 classrooms

- Homicide is the 3rd leading cause of death among all children
- Homicide is the leading cause of death for African-American adolescents 10 to 17 years of age.

How Common Is Violence Against Children?

National Survey of Children’s Exposure to Violence, 2008

- **Child maltreatment**: 1 of 10 or 7.5 million children in past year
- **Assault**: 9 of 20 or 33 million children in past year
- **Sexual victimization**: 1 of 16 or 5 million children in past year
- **Witness violence**: 1 of 4 or 19 million children in past year
The Influence of Violence Against Children throughout Life

- Violence Against Children
- Social, emotional, and cognitive Impairments
- Adoption of health-risk behaviors
- Disease, injury, and disability
- Early death
- Death

Birth
The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

- **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**
  - Physical, sexual, and emotional maltreatment, and growing up with
    - Intimate partner violence against mother
    - Household substance abuse, mental illness or suicidality
    - Household member in prison

- **ACE score**
  - Number of exposures to the different types of adverse experiences that occurred to a respondent as a child

- **ACE study**
  - Retrospective cohort study of >17,000 participants
  - HMO population Kaiser Permanente in San Diego
  - Impact of ACEs on health throughout the lifespan

ACE Score and Adult Depression

Adjusted odds ratio vs Number of ACEs

ACE, Adverse childhood experience

ACE Score and Adult Cardiovascular Disease

ACE, Adverse childhood experience

ACE Score and HIV Risks

Adjusted odds ratio

Number of ACEs

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- ≥4

Ever-injected drugs  Had ≥50 intercourse partners  Ever had an STD

ACE, Adverse childhood experience
Consequences of Exposure to Community Violence for Children and Adolescents

- Psychobiological effects, e.g., blood pressure, hyperarousal
- PTSD, depression, anxiety, substance abuse
- Antisocial behavior and aggression
- Low self-esteem, separation anxiety, and relational uncertainty
- Poor peer relations, bullying

Consequences of Exposure to Teen Dating Violence

- Physical injury
- STDs/HIV diagnosis and risk behaviors
- Illicit substance use
- Smoking
- Unhealthy weight control behaviors
- Pregnancy
- Suicidality

Consequences of Violence Against Children

Disease, Injury and Disability
- STDs, including HIV
- Gynecological problems
- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- Stroke
- Cancer
- Suicide

Health-risk Behaviors
- Sexual promiscuity
- Sexual perpetration
- Alcohol abuse
- Illicit/injected-drug use
- Smoking

Social, Emotional, and Cognitive Impairments
- Depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Aggression
- Anxiety
- Somatic complaints
- Attempted suicide
- Social ostracism
- Anxiety
- Academic achievement
- Re-victimization
- Unwanted pregnancy

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Economic burden

- Productivity losses: 68.7%
- Health care costs: 20.6%
- Special education costs: 3.8%
- Criminal justice costs: 3.2%
- Child welfare costs: 3.7%

Reduction in Annual Earnings from Selected Health Events (2009 Dollars)

- Obesity: $1,938
- Teen pregnancy: $1,129
- Smoking: $2,306
- Child maltreatment: $5,855

Challenges to Reducing Violence Against Children

- Broad range of short-term and long-term health/social consequences are underappreciated
- The plasticity of the nervous system and the ability to change behavior patterns decrease over time
- As a society we have not prioritized primary prevention but invested largely in response through the child welfare and criminal justice systems
Preventing Violence Against Children is **Strategic** from a Public Health and Policy Perspective

- Viable programmatic and policy options exist
- Influences many different health/social outcomes over the life course
- Substantial cumulative impact on health/social problems
- Enormous economic costs for society
- Scientifically grounded
- Politically feasible
The healthy development of all children benefits society by providing a solid foundation for economic productivity, responsible citizenship, strong communities, and a secure nation.

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child
For more information

Visit CDC’s National Center for Injury Prevention and Control web site:

www.cdc.gov/ncipc
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