



Risk factors for the development of medical stress syndrome following surgical intervention

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Abstract

Pediatric surgical procedures involve traumatic stress that may cause psychological distress, leading to decreased adherence to continued surgical follow-up and delayed physical recovery. Risk factors for pediatric medical trauma, however, have not been studied enough. We aim to define the risk factors detectable during hospitalization in pediatric surgery and characterize children at risk of developing PTSD, in order to focus preventive interventions on these children. The participants in this prospective study were parents of 235 children aged one-thirteen years hospitalized in a pediatric surgical ward, who form a representative sample of patients of this age in the ward. They completed questionnaires measuring symptoms of psychological distress, three-five months after discharge. Higher parental stress, parental concerns regarding family social support, and parental concerns regarding sibling problems had a significant positive correlation with the children's emotional distress measured three-five months after hospitalization. Among children aged one-five years, emergency (as opposed to elective) operation and a higher number of invasive procedures were also positively correlated with the children's PTSS. There is a need to develop measurements for identifying children at high risk for developing posttraumatic stress following surgical intervention; guidelines for developing such a screening instrument are outlined.

Biography

Amichai Ben Ari is a rehabilitation psychologist who works with a population of children hospitalized after an injury or surgery and suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. As part of his job, he manages a clinic that aims to help hospitalized children cope with the psychological consequences of medical treatment. In addition, it helps parents and families acquire tools to cope with the difficulties created by the medical crisis and its implications. In addition to the clinical work, he deals with medical trauma in children on the research side as well. In his doctoral dissertation, he studied the issue of identifying risk factors for the development of medical trauma in children after medical hospitalization or after surgery. The findings of the study have so far been published in three articles in refereed journals and have been presented at several international professional conferences.



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