Family chaos, depression impact asthma control in children

A chaotic family life is detrimental to health outcomes for children with severe asthma, new research shows. These were the results of a new study led by Dr. Sally Weinstein, Associate Director of the UICDR and Associate Professor of Clinical Psychology, UIC College of Medicine, published in a recent issue of Pediatrics (click here for the study).

The first-of-its-kind study examined the connection between parent and children depression, post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms (PTSD), family functioning, and asthma control in urban minority youth with “uncontrolled asthma,” defined as excessive asthma symptoms that require use of rescue medications.

Parent, child, and family factors all play a role in the etiology and maintenance of child asthma control. Above and beyond the effects of parent and child depression, however, Continued on page 2

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family chaos emerged as a robust influence on child asthma outcomes.

The study offers a fresh perspective of exploring the psychosocial risk factors of asthma, and can equip front line providers such as Pediatricians, Community Health Workers, parents and caregivers with guidance and a resource to develop and advance a collaborative system of care for asthma management.

Pediatric Asthma: Prevalence and Disparities
Asthma is highly prevalent in the U.S., and the most common chronic disease within the pediatric population. An estimated 7 million children in this country have asthma, resulting in $50 billion direct health care costs. The negative impact of asthma becomes profoundly evident when studying comparative outcomes along socio-economic measures, where health disparities in asthma reflect an alarming higher prevalence and morbidity among urban minority youth.

We cannot underestimate the contribution of socio-economic factors to “chaotic living”, those elements that impede balancing the stress of daily life, and are disruptive to family routines, structure, and organization, particularly around asthma management.

“We wanted to look at the interplay between parent, child and family functioning and child asthma control in urban minority youth with uncontrolled asthma,” said Dr. Weinstein.

The research discovered that, in families with greater household chaos, child asthma control tended to be worse. “This is a measure of family commotion, chaos, organization, routine, noise and disruption, just how things operate in the home on a day-to-day basis," she said.

Bringing mental illness ‘Out of the Darkness’
Join us as we support the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention’s Out of the Darkness Chicagoland Walk, Saturday, September 21, 2019, at Montrose Harbor. The UICDR will be walking as a team in addition to being a sponsor of the walk. We are joining the community of nearly 250,000 people walking in hundreds of cities across the country in support of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention’s mission to save lives and bring hope to those affected by suicide. The walk is one part of Project 2025, an AFSP initiative to reduce the suicide rate in the U.S. 20% by 2025.

Please walk with our team to represent all the amazing work the UICDR and the UIC Department of Psychiatry does towards the goal of suicide prevention in youth and adults. If you cannot join in person for the walk, become a virtual walker!

Details on how to register to join the UICDR team can be found here, and please send the word out to friends and family members to donate to our team. See here for more information about the walk.

We hope you can join the UICDR in our fight against suicide. For additional information contact Sally Weinstein at sweins3@uic.edu.

The link between family/psychosocial issues and asthma
“Much research has shown a link between psychosocial issues and child asthma control, but these links are not well-understood – we do not have great answers to the questions of “why” and “how” this relationship exists. Our study aimed to address some of these gaps in the literature and our understanding of the health disparities that exist in pediatric asthma, particularly in low-income minority populations, by focusing on family chaos as a potential pathway that could explain the link between parent/child mental health and child asthma control. Our study is the first to suggest that family chaos was indeed a powerful mechanism linking parent depression and worse child asthma control in our high risk urban population,” said Dr. Weinstein.

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IN THE NEWS

COMCAST NEWSMAKERS
Dr. Olusola Ajilore and Dr. Anand Kumar featured on Comcast Newsmakers
Dr. Ajilore was interviewed on achieving mental health equity through technology, and the UICDR’s Digital Mental Health Initiative. Dr. Kumar was interviewed on combating depression, and removing the stigma surrounding mental illness, and the impact of the UICDR.

Dr. Kumar: https://uifightdepression.psych.uic.edu/node/2755
Dr. Ajilore: https://uifightdepression.psych.uic.edu/node/2757

Dr. Tory Eisenlohr-Moul featured in the Chicago Tribune
Dr. Tory Eisenlohr-Moul was featured in a Chicago Tribune story about her study on how stabilizing certain hormones that fluctuate over the menstrual cycle in women at risk for suicide can keep suicidal thoughts at bay.


Dr. Sally Weinstein
Dr. Sally Weinstein’s “Family Chaos and Asthma Control” study published in “Pediatrics,” the official journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, received extensive media coverage, including Reuters and Psych Central. The study explores how chaotic household as well as child and parent depression are risk factors for worse asthma outcomes.

Impacting clinical practice/patient outcomes

The research underscores the importance of looking beyond symptoms in children with uncontrolled asthma to address the health and well-being of the child, caregiver, and the family. These findings suggest that assessing and addressing child and parent depression is critical for improving child asthma outcomes in high risk populations. Additionally, offering education and support on family structure, organizations, and routines in the household around asthma management may be particularly important tools for the healthcare provider.

Integrating such interventions in the home via resources such as a Community Health Worker may be a key avenue for healthcare in the future.

Surprisingly few studies have examined the role of family chaos in pediatric chronic health conditions and these findings certainly point to the importance of future research exploring the role of family chaos in other pediatric chronic conditions that require daily management.

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ON DEPRESSION & RESILIENCE

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