

Insights on Risk of Secondary Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Within Pediatric Medical Practitioners

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Perspective

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INTRODUCTION

The current COVID-19 pandemic has exposed healthcare providers to increased levels of stress, anxiety, and trauma due to the overwhelming number of patients requiring medical attention. Pediatric healthcare providers are especially vulnerable to secondary post-traumatic stress disorder (SPTSD) due to the unique nature of their work. This essay aims to explore the risk factors for the development of SPTSD among pediatric healthcare providers and propose strategies to mitigate this risk.

SPTSD is a condition that affects healthcare providers who are exposed to traumatic events experienced by their patients. This condition is characterized by symptoms such as intrusive thoughts, avoidance behaviors, negative mood, and hyperarousal. SPTSD is similar to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) but differs in that it is not the healthcare provider who experienced the traumatic event, but rather the patient.

DESCRIPTION

Risk factors for the development of SPTSD among pediatric healthcare providers

- **Direct exposure to traumatic events:** Pediatric healthcare providers are directly exposed to traumatic events such as child abuse, neglect, and medical emergencies^[1-3]. The emotional toll of witnessing these events can lead to the development of SPTSD.
- **Empathy and emotional connection:** Pediatric healthcare providers often form emotional connections with their patients and families, which can lead to increased empathy and sensitivity to the traumatic experiences of their patients. This emotional connection can make it more challenging to cope with the stress of their work, leading to the development of SPTSD.
- **High workload and long hours:** Pediatric healthcare providers often work long hours and have high workloads, which can lead to burnout, stress, and exhaustion. These factors can contribute to the development of SPTSD.
- **Lack of support:** Healthcare providers who lack social support, such as coworkers and supervisors, may feel isolated and alone in their work, leading to increased stress and the development of SPTSD.
- **Personal trauma history:** Healthcare providers who have experienced trauma in their personal lives may be more susceptible to developing SPTSD. The personal trauma may be triggered by exposure to traumatic events in their work, leading to the development of SPTSD.

Strategies to Mitigate the Risk of Developing SPTSD Among Pediatric Healthcare Providers

- **Peer support programs:** Peer support programs can provide healthcare providers with a safe and confidential space to discuss their experiences and feelings related to their work. Peer support can also provide emotional validation and help

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healthcare providers develop coping strategies^[4,5].

- **Regular mental health check-ins:** Healthcare organizations can provide regular mental health check-ins for their employees to identify and address any signs of stress or trauma early on. This can help prevent the development of SPTSD and other mental health conditions.
- **Stress reduction techniques:** Healthcare providers can benefit from stress reduction techniques such as mindfulness, yoga, and meditation. These techniques can help healthcare providers cope with stress and reduce the risk of developing SPTSD.
- **Time off and self-care:** Healthcare providers can benefit from taking time off work to rest and engage in self-care activities such as exercise, hobbies, and spending time with loved ones. This can help healthcare providers recharge and reduce the risk of burnout and the development of SPTSD.

CONCLUSION

Pediatric healthcare providers are at increased risk of developing SPTSD due to the unique nature of their work. Healthcare providers can benefit from training on trauma-informed care, which focuses on understanding the impact of trauma on patients and how to provide care in a way that is sensitive to the patient's trauma history. This training can help healthcare providers develop a deeper understanding of their patients' experiences, which can help prevent the development of SPTSD.

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