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◄ Previous Article | Next Article ►

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Parental Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms as a **Moderator of Child's Acute Biological Response** and Subsequent Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms in Pediatric Injury Patients

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Abstract

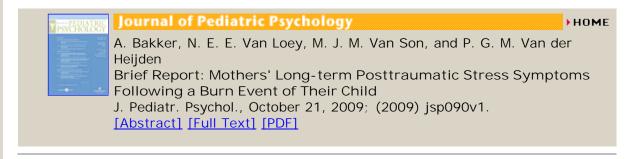
Objective To examine how parental responses following pediatric injury may influence their child's posttraumatic stress symptoms (PTSS). Methods Heart rate (HR) from 82 pediatric injury patients was measured during emergency medical services (EMSs) transport and following hospital admission. Twelve-hour urinary cortisol levels were assessed upon admission. Child PTSS and parental PTSS and general distress were assessed 6 weeks and 6 months after trauma. Results Six-week parental PTSS predicted 6-month child PTSS even after controlling for demographics and general parent distress ($\Delta R^2 = .08$, p = .03). Parental PTSS moderated the relationship between (a) child cortisol levels and 6month child PTSS ($\Delta R^2 = .08$, p = .03) and between (b) hospital HR and 6-month child PTSS ($\Delta R^2 = .09$, p = .03). **Conclusion** The present findings suggest that parental response to trauma may interact with child acute physiological responses to predict persistent child PTSS.

Key words: acute predictors; children; parents; posttraumatic stress disorder.

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