

Violence, Aggression and Impulsivity: A Major Danger for Children

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Editorial

Babies and children are vulnerable and helpless; they have no way of reacting to the lack of attention or to an aggression [1]. As well, the most frequent suffering of children is due to carelessness by the parents, lack of attention to their needs, lack of love, a syndrome called "the neglected child". Pedophilia and sexual abuse are only very rarely linked to violence, even if it is a psychological violence. The person affected by pedophilia is able to study his victim at length and to build a spider web around the child in order to earn the trust of this new friend, and can therefore become easy to abuse [2].

Children are fragile and may become an easy prey for teens and adults of all ages who do not control their actions. The habitual use of drugs and alcohol aggravates their instability and makes them both dangerous and unpredictable. Several psychiatric diseases may lead to aggression, even against their own family and friends [3,4]. An impulsive person often shows symptoms of anxiety, depression and behavioral decontrol related to previous traumatic experiences which caused a psychopathological condition [5,6]. Violence and rape can cause irreversible damage, especially to the brain functions of babies and young children. Physical injury, which may go as far as killing the child who is a victim of abuse, is currently a serious social problem and is increasingly more widespread around the world. It is not uncommon to see battered children in an Emergency Room [7], the most frequently presenting with abusive head trauma (AHT), which includes the recently described Shaken Baby Syndrome [8-10]. This is a serious brain injury that results from blunt force. The child receives a blow to the head or is thrown or dropped or violently shaken. These injuries cause severe damage and often irreversible late effects [11]. The police and the psychiatrists are called in at once, while pediatricians are committed to helping the victims.

Impulsivity is a multifactorial symptom that involves a tendency to act on another person, usually with aggressiveness. Genetics may play a role. Some people have a predisposition toward rapid, unplanned reactions to internal or external stimuli, which results in impulsivity and aggressiveness.

Every year about 40,000 children are admitted to the Emergency Room of our Children's Hospital, including 17,000 who are admitted because of trauma. Thirty to 40 children suffer from violence, rape, or from beatings or mistreatment. They often show torsion fractures, which are typical of an injury. Abusive head trauma (AHT) is the most dangerous type of abuse with regard to the child's future brain function [12-14], and among these cases, every year 2 or 3 are victims of the Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS) [15]. Even if the best treatment is started immediately, severe late effects and often death cannot be avoided.

Too many programs presented by TV, movies, and the internet show violence, too many may lead to dangerous consequences and often create excitement in people suffering from psychiatric disorders, mostly fragile adolescents. It would be an important step for politicians to place restrictions on violent programs. On the contrary special information and prevention programs worldwide could be useful.

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