

ACQUIRED VULNERABILITY

American College of Forensic
Psychiatry, Annual Meeting,
San Francisco 1998

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Mechanisms of Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma

- I. Verbal and non-verbal transmission of information.
- II. Transmission of acquired traits (vertical non-genetic transmission of traits- Kendler).
- III. Intrafamilial microtraumatization/ dysregulation. (Unpredictable familial environments = “dysregulating factor”)

The “Egg Shell” Plaintiff in Psychiatry (History)

- Dulieu v. White (1901)
- Personality changes (Shimman v. Frank-1980; Thames v. Zerangue-1982)
- Psychosis (Freyermuth v. Lutfy-1978)
- Phobia (Kravinsky v. Glover-1979)
- Schizophrenia (Steinhauser v. Hertz Corp-1970)

“Egg Shell” Cont’d.

- Childhood schizophrenia after assault (A.A. v. State-1964)
- Aggravation of dissociative disorder after sexual harassment (Poole v. Copland Inc.-1996)

“Egg Shell” - General Guidelines

- 1) No DSM-IV criteria = no psychiatric diagnosis
- 2) If repeated injuries have had cumulative effect, but no diagnosable symptomatology present = stressors have not reached critical threshold for injury
- 3) If repeated injuries + one specific event = symptoms = psychiatric injury

CONTRIBUTIONS

- Freud, S (1895-1905): “Trauma”
- Khan, MM (1964): Cumulative trauma-
Psychoanalytic Study of the Child
- Yehuda, R et al (1995): Cumulative lifetime
trauma affects outcome in Holocaust surv.
- Klerman, GL et al (1985): “Birth-cohort
trends” (Arch. Gen. Psychiatry)

Animal Model of Intergenerational Transmission (Soumi & Levine)

- A. Cross-generational transmission via observation or learning
- B. Cross-generational transmission via effects on maternal behavior
- C. Cross-generational transmission via parental mechanisms (biological changes i.e., maternal glucocorticoids after stress during gestation)

Novac & Hubert-Schneider (1998)

- “Intergenerational transmission of trauma in humans may be a phylogenetically based mechanism of adaptation, a biologically based mechanism by which offspring are prepared and preinformed about dangers.”

For additional information regarding
this subject, please contact Dr. Novac
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