Clinical Capsules

Female Victimization and Violence

Girls who reported being the victims of violence were 2.2 times more likely to engage in violent behavior themselves, wrote Beth E. Molnar, Sc.D., and her colleagues at Harvard University (Arch. Pediatr. Adolesc. Med. 2005;159:731-9).

In a longitudinal study, a population-based sample of 637 girls aged 9-15 years at baseline participated in three home interviews between November 1995 and January 2002. Overall, 38% of the girls reported engaging in at least one violent act during the previous 12 months at baseline; 28% reported violent behavior during the past 12 months at the first follow-up interview; and 14% reported violent behavior at the second follow-up interview.

The investigators said their results point to the key role of violent victimization in the development of aggression by girls.

Family Teasing Hits Home

When family members teased middle school girls about their appearance, the teasing had a significant impact on the girls' dissatisfaction with their bodies, said Helene Keery, Ph.D., of the Eating Disorders Institute at Methodist Hospital, St. Louis Park, Minn., and her colleagues.

The study included self-reported data from 372 girls, mean age 12.6 years (J. Adolesc. Health 2005;37:120-7). Overall, 23% of the girls reported that a parent teased them about their appearance, and 12% reported parental teasing about being overweight. Fathers were more likely than mothers to tease about appearance (19% vs. 13%) and about being overweight (10% vs. 6%). Paternal teasing was a significant predictor of body dissatisfaction, eating restriction, bulimic behavior, low self-esteem, and depression; maternal teasing was a significant predictor of depression.

Quest for Muscles and Steroid Use

Both boys and girls who reported a desire to look like celebrities in magazines were significantly more likely to use products to enhance their physiques, reported Alison E. Field, Sc.D., of Harvard University, and her colleagues.

In a cross-sectional study of 6,212 girls and 4,237 boys aged 12-18 years, 8% of girls and 12% of boys reported using products to enhance appearance or strength. Overall, about 30% of both boys and girls reported that they frequently thought about wanting more muscle tone and definition (Pediatrics 2005;116:214-20).

After adjustment for confounding variables, boys who read men's magazines were significantly more likely to use products such as protein powder or creatine at least weekly, compared with their peers who did not read such magazines. Girls who were trying to look like female celebrities were significantly more likely to use appearance-enhancing products than their peers who were not trying to look like celebrities, independent of efforts to gain or lose weight.

Early Warning Signs in Boys?

Conduct disorder symptoms in 8-year-old boys were independent predictors of substance abuse, antisocial personality, and psychotic disorders in adulthood, said Andre Sourander, M.D., of Turku (Finland) University Hospital, and his associates.

The 10- to 15-year follow-up study included data on 2,712 males who had completed the Children's Depression Inventory when they were 8 years old (J. Am Acad. Child Adolesc. Psychiatry 2005;44:756-67). Their teachers and parents also completed questionnaires.

Overall, 283 (10.4%) of the men had a psychiatric disorder based on follow-up data in early adulthood. Given these findings, mental health care professionals would do well to increase efforts to improve prevention, early identification, and treatment efficacy, the investigators said.

ADHD and Moderate Mental Retardation

Risperidone was associated with a greater reduction of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder symptoms compared with methylphenidate in children with moderate mental retardation, said Alceu Gomes Correia Filho, M.D., of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, and colleagues.

By the end point of the 4-week, single-blind study, sponsored in part by Novartis and Janssen-Cilag, 24 children and adolescents aged 6-16 years had received a mean final dose of 25 mg/day of methylphenidate and 21 had received a mean final dose of 2.9 mg/day of risperidone (Risperdal).

Efficacy in both groups improved as dosage increased during the course of the study, but risperidone was associated with greater efficacy on the overall SNAP-IV Total scores. A significant weight gain of 1.01 kg was seen in the risperidone group; a mean weight loss of 0.53 kg was seen in the methylphenidate group.

Side effects profiles in both groups were similar to those found in children and adolescents with IQ levels in the normal range who were taking these medications for attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder.

—Heidi Splete