

Department of Research Abstracts

MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING DURING RESIDENCY IS ASSOCIATED WITH GREATER CONFIDENCE IN MENTAL HEALTH CARE

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Background: Although increasing numbers of children visiting pediatricians have mental health problems, many pediatricians have reported a lack of confidence with mental health issues. It is therefore important to understand current residency training in mental health issues.

Objective: To examine how the mental health training pediatric residents receive is related to their confidence in addressing the mental health needs of their patients.

Design/Methods: Data came from the 2007 AAP Graduating Residents Survey. A random sample of 1000 residents was contacted up to 8 times and 638 (63.8%) responded. The amount of training was examined in two ways: 1) completion of rotations in Child Psychiatry, Adolescent Medicine and Behavioral/Developmental Peds, and 2) mental health training scales created by summing whether residents had received training (yes/no) in 10 areas of mental health assessment, education, and/or treatment for children and, in a separate scale, for adolescents. The outcome of interest was residents' confidence in providing mental health care for patients. Confidence was measured with a 3-item scale ($\alpha=.77$) assessing confidence in ability to diagnose child/adolescent mental health problems and confidence in ability to treat with counseling, and/or medication. A weighted multiple regression was used to examine the relationship between training and confidence.

Results: Most graduating residents completed mandated rotations in Adolescent Medicine and Behavioral/Developmental Pediatrics (87%, 88%), but fewer completed an elective Child Psychiatry (18%) rotation.

Residents who completed a rotation in Child Psychiatry were more confident in their ability to provide mental health care ($p=.012$). Similarly, residents who reported more mental health care training in the 10 areas related to children ($p=.025$) were more confident in their ability to provide mental health care. Significant associations were not seen for Adolescent Medicine or Behavioral/Developmental Peds rotations, nor for mental health care training related to adolescents.

Conclusions: Completion of an elective child psychiatry rotation and more training in mental health assessment, education and treatment related to children are associated with greater confidence in identifying and treating pediatric mental health problems.

