



THE JACOBS CENTER RESEARCH SEMINAR SERIES

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PSYCHOBIOLOGY OF STRESS IN HUMAN PREGNANCY

Research on stress provocation in pregnant women may increase our understanding of psychobiological mechanisms underlying the compensation of negative stress effects. Up to now this research has resulted in heterogeneous findings regarding the alterations of the hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal axis and the autonomic nervous system with respect to the on-going pregnancy and the type of stressor. In a series of studies we examined the endocrine and autonomic responses to (a) standardized psychosocial stress at different stages of pregnancy, (b) to an invasive diagnostic procedure (amniocentesis) during the second trimester, and (c) standardized psychosocial stress in 10 year old children whose mothers have received glucocorticoids (GC) during second trimester as a consequence of preterm labour compared to 10 year old children from healthy pregnancies.

Our data provide evidence that healthy pregnant women show characteristic stress responses during pregnancy and allostatic processes such as an altered cortisol to cortisone conversion seem to be initiated to counterbalance the effects of acute stress. Children whose mothers were exposed to GC during pregnancy show distinct psychobiological stress susceptibility towards acute psychosocial stress. Stress management programs during pregnancy may increase resilience against acute and chronic stress and prevent negative outcomes for the offspring.

Friday, April 13, 2018 - 10:30 h

At the Jacobs Center for Productive Youth Development
Andreasstrasse 15, 4th floor, AND 4.19, 8050 Zürich