

Jacobs Center Seminar Series

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Testing the Ecophenotype Model: Brain Structure in Conduct Disorder With and Without Childhood Maltreatment

Existing evidence indicates that Conduct Disorder (CD) - a youth disorder marked by anti-social behaviours - is associated with structural alterations in brain regions implicated in social and emotional processing. However, although childhood maltreatment is a key risk factor for CD and is independently linked to neuroanatomical alterations, little is known regarding the influence of maltreatment on brain alterations in CD.

This talk will explore the application of Teicher and Samson's (2013) ecophenotype model to CD, which suggests that childhood maltreatment designates a clinically and neurobiologically distinct subgroup of patients. I will discuss our recent study, in which we explored cortical structure alterations in a mixed-sex sample of young people with CD with versus without a history of childhood maltreatment

from the FemNAT-CD project. We found that maltreated and non-maltreated CD subgroups showed distinct neurobiological differences compared to age-matched controls and also differed from each other. In line with the ecophenotype model, CD youths with a history of maltreatment showed more widespread structural alterations relative to controls, and lower volume, surface area and cortical folding in frontal, temporal, and parietal regions than non-maltreated CD youths. These findings suggest that maltreatment-related and non-maltreatment-related forms of CD might be partially distinct at the neurobiological level and highlight the importance of considering maltreatment in future studies of CD (and other disorders).

Friday, May 12, 2023, 10:15 h

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