

Smoking during pregnancy factor in childhood behavioural disorders

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(PhysOrg.com) -- New University of Otago, Christchurch, research has identified common factors in the far-reaching childhood behavioural conditions, Conduct Disorder (CD) and Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), including maternal smoking during pregnancy and exposure to family violence.

Data for the study was drawn from the long-running Christchurch Health and Development Study and results were published in the Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

Lead researcher Dr Joe Boden says the study examined the influence of a number of common childhood social and environmental factors which contribute to the development of CD and ODD.

Boden says the disorders frequently co-occur, so individuals with symptoms of one disorder have a strong likelihood of having symptoms of the other.

Boden and his colleagues found the two disorders had several factors in common: low family [socioeconomic status](#); family instability; childhood exposure to physical abuse, sexual abuse or interparental violence; maternal smoking during pregnancy; child IQ; and affiliation with deviant (delinquent and substance using) peers.

Factors which predicted CD but not ODD were parental maladaptive behaviour (criminality, [alcohol problems](#) and [illicit drug use](#)) and being

male.

Boden says the study provides hope for those with the disorders as treatment and prevention approaches which target these factors will likely reduce the effects of CD and ODD on the sufferer in later life.

CD and ODD are behaviour disorders which emerge in childhood and have been shown to have adverse effects on mental health and psychosocial adjustment in adolescence and early adulthood.

Adverse effects of both CD and ODD in late adolescence and early adulthood include increased risks of [mental health disorders](#); substance use disorders; criminal offending; lower [educational achievement](#) and both under-employment and unemployment.

The Advisory Group for Conduct Problems (AGCP) is a group which consults to several Government Ministries such as health, education and social development.

In one report, the AGCP said of disruptive behaviour disorders such as CD and ODD: "There is probably no other common childhood condition that is associated with such far-reaching and pervasive developmental consequences."

The prevalence of each of the disorders is approximately 10-15% amongst adolescents.

Provided by University of Otago

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