

Parental addictions linked to adult children's depression

May 9 2013

The offspring of parents who were addicted to drugs or alcohol are more likely to be depressed in adulthood, according to a new study by University of Toronto researchers.

In a paper published online in the journal *Psychiatry Research* this month, investigators examined the association between parental addictions and adult depression in a [representative sample](#) of 6,268 adults, drawn from the 2005 Canadian Community [Health Survey](#). Of these respondents, 312 had a [major depressive episode](#) within the year preceding the survey and 877 reported that while they were under the age of 18 and still living at home that at least one parent who drank or used drugs "so often that it caused problems for the family".

Results indicate that individuals whose parents were addicted to drugs or alcohol are more likely to develop depression than their peers. After adjusting for age, sex and race, parental addictions were associated with more than twice the odds of adult depression, says lead author Esme Fuller-Thomson, Professor and Sandra Rotman Endowed Chair in the University of Toronto's Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work and the Department of Family and Community Medicine.

"Even after adjusting for factors ranging from [childhood maltreatment](#) and parental unemployment to adult health behaviours including smoking and [alcohol consumption](#), we found that parental addictions were associated with 69 per cent higher odds of depression in adulthood" explains Fuller-Thomson. The study was co-authored with four graduate

students at the University of Toronto, Robyn Katz, Vi Phan, Jessica Liddycoat and Sarah Brennenstuhl.

This study could not determine the cause of the relationship between parental addictions and adult depression. Co-author Robyn Katz, suggests that "It is possible that the prolonged and inescapable strain of parental addictions may permanently alter the way these children's bodies reacts to stress throughout their life. One important avenue for future research is to investigate potential dysfunctions in cortisol production – the hormone that prepares us for 'fight or flight' –which may influence the later development of depression."

"These findings underscore the intergenerational consequences of drug and alcohol addiction and reinforce the need to develop interventions that support healthy childhood development," says Prof. Fuller-Thomson. "As an important first step, children who experience toxic stress at home can be greatly helped by the stable involvement of caring adults, including grandparents, teachers, coaches, neighbors and social workers. Although more research is needed to determine if access to a responsive and loving adult decreases the likelihood of adult depression among children exposed to parental [addictions](#), we do know that these caring relationships promote healthy development and buffer stress."

More information: [www.sciencedirect.com/science/ ...
ii/S016517811300098X](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/.../S016517811300098X)

Provided by University of Toronto

Citation: Parental addictions linked to adult children's depression (2013, May 9) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-05-parental-addictions-linked-adult-children.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.