

Study could lead to better treatment for child brain injuries

June 26 2014



UQ researchers have found PTSD is contributing to pain in children with traumatic brain injuries, and not the other way around.

(Medical Xpress)—The discovery of a new link between post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), pain and children with traumatic brain injuries could lead to better treatment methods, according to a new study.

University of Queensland researcher Erin Brown said the study, led by the Centre of National Research on Disability and Rehabilitation Medicine (CONROD), found PTSD was contributing to [pain](#) in children with traumatic brain injuries, and not the other way around.

"It has been well established that PTSD and pain are related after injury, but until now it has been unclear whether pain is causing children to develop PTSD, or whether PTSD is causing the pain," Ms Brown said.

"The study indicates that PTSD is the driving cause of lingering pain in children with a [traumatic brain injury](#).

"This contradicts previous theories that PTSD may have been caused by lingering pain."

Ms Brown said the study had allowed researchers to propose a new model for understanding how PTSD is related to pain in children with traumatic brain injuries.

The findings may aid the clinical treatment of children recovering from [head injuries](#).

"Our research shows that children with a traumatic brain injury may benefit from being screened for PTSD," Ms Brown said.

"Those children who do screen positive for PTSD should then be linked with appropriate treatment.

"Children who are identified and treated early may recover more rapidly and experience reduced pain."

Ms Brown said the study was the first to examine the interaction between PTSD and pain in a group of children with mild to severe traumatic brain injuries.

The study, published in the *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, included 195 children aged six to 15 who were admitted to an Australian hospital with mild-to-severe traumatic brain injuries.

The children were screened for PTSD by a clinician, while parents were surveyed on their child's pain levels over an 18-month period following the injury. Around 200 of every 100,000 Australian [children](#) aged under 15 are diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury annually.

More information: *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*,
jpepsy.oxfordjournals.org/content/39/5/512.abstract

Provided by University of Queensland

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