

New insights into the treatment of children and youth exposed to acts of terror

July 3 2014

In a cluster of articles released today in the peer reviewed *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, researchers provide new insights into the treatment of children and youth exposed to acts of terror. The work is drawn from studies examining the mass shooting at Utoya, Norway in 2011, and two school shootings in Finland – Jokela in 2007 and Kauhajoki in 2008.

A lead researcher in the cluster is noted Norwegian child psychiatrist and terror expert Dr. Grete Dyb of the University of Oslo and the Norwegian Center for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies.

"Terror isn't unknown to European youth anymore," states Dyb, who has authored multiple papers related to children and post traumatic stress, "yet, surprisingly little documentation exists on how outreach efforts are – or should be – conducted following terror events."

While their outreach methods differ, both Norway and Finland have been proactive in their responses, actively seeking to connect with and aid affected children and youth. This collection of papers provides insights gleaned, in part, by studying these two countries' responses.

"We know that an immediate pro-active outreach effort is vital in preventing post traumatic stress and other psychological difficulties. What became clear in our studies is that the outreach should continue for at least two years," says Dyb, pointing to a key finding in the research.

Though [school shootings](#) have seen a dramatic rise in the past decade – in the U.S. and more recently Europe – there has been a dearth of evidence-based research on what actually works in terms of intervention efforts. Unique in this collection is a study that involved interviews with Finnish victims who were asked, directly, what they felt helped.

Other key areas of the reports examine how the Norwegian outreach effort involved teachers, who were provided with materials and guidance to help aid Utoya survivors as they returned to [school](#).

According to the papers, school system involvement should be a key element in outreach efforts. However, Dyb points out: "Teachers need, for the sake of the children, to remain teachers and not become a mere shoulder to cry on."

"Important questions for teachers to ask themselves are: How can we help them achieve what they are there to achieve? How can we help them so they continue to learn in spite of their trauma?" adds Dyb. "We can't simply allow them to be excused from school and send them home when they are having difficulty functioning at school. The rest of their lives are at stake."

"More training is needed. We need teachers to be more trauma informed. This is important for all [teachers](#)."

More information: The collection of articles can be accessed at www.ejpt.net

Provided by Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies

Citation: New insights into the treatment of children and youth exposed to acts of terror (2014, July 3) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-07-insights-treatment-children-youth-exposed.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.