Most Youth Injuries at Home Results From Family Violence

More than half of ER injuries sustained by youth during the pandemic resulted from violence by family members.

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In many families, it can be difficult for adults and children to live in harmony. The COVID-19 pandemic seems to have exacerbated the resultant tensions from this volatile dynamic, suggest study findings published in the International Journal of Injury Control and Safety Promotion showing that teens treated in the ER for violence-related injuries at home experienced these episodes most often at the hands of a parent or guardian, reports a press release from Johns Hopkins Medicine.

Researchers from the Johns Hopkins Children's Center presented the findings during the Council on Injury, Violence and Poison Prevention program at the American Academy of Pediatrics 2021 National Conference and Exhibition in Philadelphia.

For the study, investigators compared family violence–related visits to the Children's Center emergency room prior to the pandemic (January 1, 2019 to March 29, 2020) with those that occurred during the pandemic (March 30, 2020 to December 31, 2020).

Of violence-related visits to health providers by 819 youngsters between ages 10 and 15, most, or 54.7%, involved a family member, most frequently a parent or guardian. (Study participants were primarily Black males enrolled in a public insurance plan.)

Researchers also found that during the pandemic these incidences were 10% more likely to take place in the child's home compared with the period before the coronavirus outbreak.

Scientists noted the following differences in the use of alcohol, illegal drugs and weapons, respectively, in episodes of domestic violence during the pandemic compared with those that happened prior to the pandemic: 12.5% versus 5.0%, 11.4% versus 3.0% and 30.4% versus 8.5%.

"We know that exposure to family violence increases a child or teen's risk for perpetrating violence in their own future relationships," said Leticia Ryan, MD, MPH, the chief of Johns Hopkins Children's Center's pediatric emergency medicine division and lead study author. "The emergency department plays an important role by identifying at-risk youth, initiating preventive interventions

and stopping the negative cycle."

To learn more about the status of treatment for children exposed to violence, read "Half of Kids With Behavioral Health Issues Don't Receive Help."

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