Childhood Hardships Contribute to Poor Adult Health

About 60% of US adults have experienced at least 1 adverse childhood experience (ACE) and nearly 16% experienced 4 or more, substantially increasing their risk of poor health outcomes, according to the CDC’s first analysis of childhood ACEs.

Childhood adverse experience can run the gamut from sexual and physical abuse to witnessing violence or growing up in a family with mental health or substance misuse problems. Based on surveys of 144,000 adults in 25 states, the findings suggest there is an urgent need for interventions to prevent ACEs and to provide care for those who experience them.

Adversity in childhood can increase the risk of dying from 5 of the top 10 causes of death in the United States: heart disease, cancer, respiratory diseases, diabetes, and suicide, Anne Schuchat, MD, the CDC’s principal deputy director, said during a press briefing. Preventing ACEs could potentially reduce the number of US residents with coronary heart disease by 1.9 million, cases of overweight or obesity by 2.5 million, and cases of depression by 21 million, the report noted.

“The accumulation of ACEs can lead to health and social problems throughout childhood and into adulthood,” Schuchat said. “Multiple different types of ACEs together can produce toxic stress which is a chronic activation of the stress response system that results in negative effects on brain development, behavior, and well-being.” She noted that the CDC has a guide to evidence-based methods to prevent or reduce the impact of ACEs.

Historic, social, and economic factors have created inequities in the burden of childhood ACEs, the report noted. As a result, women, American Indian/Alaska Native populations, black people, and other racial and ethnic subgroups were more likely to have experienced 4 or more types of ACEs than men or white individuals.

“Health care providers can recognize current risks in children and ACEs history in adults and refer patients to effective family services and support,” the report’s authors wrote.

Antibiotic Resistance Threat Grows

Antibiotic-resistant microbes, including *Clostridioides difficile*, cause more than 3 million infections and 48,000 deaths each year in the United States, according to the CDC’s latest estimates.

In its update, the CDC noted that although its 2013 estimates stated that 23,000 deaths occurred annually from antibiotic resistance, the figure really was 44,000. The difference was revealed through more extensive data that have since become available. Although the revision suggests the threat is nearly twice as large as previous estimates, the authors noted progress has been made—prevention efforts have reduced the number of antibiotic resistance deaths by 18% overall and by nearly 30% in hospitals.

“The 2013 report propelled the nation toward critical action and investments against antibiotic resistance,” CDC Director Robert Redfield, MD, said in a statement. The recent update “demonstrates notable progress, yet the threat is still real,” he added.

Eighteen antibiotic-resistant bacteria or fungi were ranked as urgent, serious, or concerning. That list included 2 new microbes considered urgent threats, *Candida auris* and carbapenem-resistant *Acinetobacter*. They join carbapenem-resistant *Enterobacteriaceae*, *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*, and *C difficile*, which remain urgent threats. In a press briefing, Redfield noted that *C auris* has recently emerged as a threat on 5 continents simultaneously and kills 1 in 3 infected patients. Some strains are resistant to all 3 classes of antifungal drugs, he said.

The CDC urges ongoing vigilance in health care and in communities to help contain and reduce these threats, including implementing the agency’s antibiotic-resistant microbe containment strategy.

“Each of us has an important role in combating it,” Redfield said. “Lives here in the United States and around the world depend on it.” – Bridget Kuehn, MSJ

Note: Source references are available through embedded hyperlinks in the article text online.