Treatment Selection for Traumatized Children: PCIT or TF-CBT?

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October 14, 2010
Best Practices for Maltreated Children

- Strong empirical support for both PCIT and TF-CBT
TF-CBT Overview

- Children ages 3-18 years
- Nonoffending Parent/caregiver
- Children from various environments
- Families of various races and cultures (e.g., Hispanic, African American)
- History of:
  - Sexual abuse
  - Exposure to domestic violence
  - Physical abuse
  - Car accidents
  - Natural disasters (flooding, fires, earthquakes)
  - Physical trauma (dog bites, surgeries, etc.)
  - Witnessing a violent crime
  - Traumatic grief
TF-CBT Components

- Psychoeducation/Parenting Skills
- Relaxation Training
- Affective Regulation and Expression
- Cognitive Coping
- Trauma Narrative development & processing
- In vivo gradual exposure
- Conjoint parent child sessions
- Enhancing safety and future development/growth
Common Clinical Presentation of Maltreated Children

- Poor Affect Regulation
- Externalizing Behaviors (e.g., temper tantrums, noncompliance, physical aggression)
- Internalizing Behaviors (e.g., withdrawal, sadness, anxiety)
- Trauma Symptoms (e.g., hyperarousal, reexperiencing, avoidance)
Clinical Symptoms Guide Treatment

- Predominant Externalizing Behaviors = PCIT or other parenting EBT program
- Predominant Internalizing and Trauma Symptoms = TF-CBT
- Externalizing, Internalizing + trauma symptoms = ?
Use of Assessment in Decision Making

- Child Behavior Checklist
- Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory
- Trauma Symptom Checklist for Young Children
- UCLA PTSD Index
Decision Tree – PCIT or TF-CBT
(Child Age: 2.5 years to 8 years)

**Presenting Problems**
- Behavioral Disruption Only
- Both Behavioral Disruption/ Trauma Symptoms
- Trauma Symptoms Only

**Initial Criteria**
- CBCL Ext T Score ≥ 65
- ECBI Intensity Score > 95+
- ECBI Problem Score > 7+
- TSCYC Score < 65
- UCLA PTSD Score < 22
- CBCL Ext T Score > 65
- ECBI Intensity Score ≥ 95+
- ECBI Problem Score ≥ 7+
- TSCYC Score ≥ 65
- UCLA PTSD Score ≥ 22
- CBCL Ext T Score < 65
- ECBI Intensity Score > 95
- ECBI Problem Score > 7
- TSCYC Score ≥ 65
- UCLA PTSD Score ≥ 22

**Treatment Selection**
- PCIT (or other parenting EBP program)
- TF-CBT

**Secondary Criteria**
- Risk of placement loss due to disruptive behaviors
- Impaired parent-child relationship
- History of child sexual abuse
- Sexualized behavior
- Competent caregiver
- Externalized behaviors are manageable

Decision Tree - PCIT or TF-CBT. Sedlar, G., Blacker, D., Urquiza. A., & Ornelas-Knight, M. (2010). Copyright 2010 University of California Davis CAARE Center. Do not distribute or reproduce without permission from the authors.
Case Example: S.

- 6 year old Latina girl
- Exposure to maternal neglect, domestic violence, and sexual abuse
- Placed with an experienced foster parent
- Sexually Inappropriate Behavior
Case Example: S.

- CBCL: Internalizing=72; Externalizing=69
- ECBI Intensity=132
- ECBI Problem=14
- TSCYC=107; Sexual Concerns=110
- UCLA PTSD=24
Use of Decision Tree

- Competent Caregiver
- Sexualized Behaviors
- History of Sexual Abuse
- Externalized Behaviors Manageable
- Recommended Treatment: TF-CBT
Case Example: A.

- 6 year old Latina girl
- Born Failure to Thrive
- History of severe physical, emotional, and sexual abuse
- Physically Aggressive behavior including animal cruelty
- Reported auditory hallucinations
- Placed with maternal aunt and other siblings
Case Example: A.

- CBCL: Internalizing=74; Externalizing=64
- ECBI Intensity=147
- ECBI Problem=13
- NO TSCYC or UCLA but Sleep Problems on CBCL=82 and Anxiety Problems=70
Use of Decision Tree

- Risk for disrupted placement
- Competent caregiver but client’s behaviors were overwhelming to her (e.g., PSI Parent-Child Dysfunction = 99th percentile)
- PCIT first then referred for Trauma Focused therapy