

Risk factors for traumatic stress in young children and parents following paediatric burn injury

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Objectives: The current risk factor literature suggests that there is a significant positive association between child and parent posttraumatic stress (PTSS) following trauma. This longitudinal study aimed to investigate, and thus better understand, the direction of the relationship between child and parent distress following medical trauma. **Methods:** Participants were 130 parents of young children (1-6 years) with unintentional burns. Data was collected within 2 weeks, 1 month and 6 months of burn injury using developmentally sensitive diagnostic interviews and questionnaires. **Results:** Structural equation modelling analyses indicated that parents' acute distress and PTSS contributed significantly to the development and maintenance of child PTSS over 6 months. However, evidence for a bidirectional model was not found as child distress did not significantly contribute to parent distress concurrently or longitudinally. **Conclusion:** These results highlight the important influence that parental functioning can have on a young child's recovery following burn injury. The clinical and research implications of these findings will be discussed.

Key Words

Young children; Posttraumatic stress disorder; risk factors; parent-child relationship.

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