PROJECT INFORMATION

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Comparing Two Approaches to Help Parents Support Their Children's Social and Emotional Recovery after a Serious Accidental Injury

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What was the research about?

Accidental injuries, such as serious burns or broken bones, are a major reason why children go to the hospital. After their bodies heal, children sometimes have social or emotional problems that remain. It can be hard for parents to know how to talk to their children to help them get better.

In this study, the research team compared two ways to help parents talk to their child after a serious injury:

- The **Link for Injured Kids program**. Before leaving the hospital, parents watched a video and received training about talking with their children about their injury.
- **Trauma education**. As they left the hospital, parents received a booklet with tips on talking with their children.

The team looked at children's symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, and depression. They also looked at quality of life, emotional problems, and behaviors like how children act around their peers.

What were the results?

After six months, the two approaches didn't differ in the children's symptoms of PTSD and depression. In both approaches, children had fewer PTSD and depression symptoms.

Compared with children of parents who received trauma education, children of parents in the Link program had slightly fewer behavior problems. Quality of life was similar for both approaches.

Who was in the study?

The study included 314 parent-child pairs. Children were ages 10 to 17 and had been in the hospital because of an accident. Of the children, 86 percent were white, 4 percent were African American, 6 percent were another race or more than one race, and 3 percent didn't report a race. Also, 8 percent were Hispanic. The average age was 14, and 63 percent were boys.

What did the research team do?

While parents were still at the hospital, the research team assigned parents by chance to either the Link program or trauma education. After six weeks, parents in the Link program received a follow-up training. Parents in the trauma education group got a new booklet if they needed one. Parents and children in both groups filled out surveys at the hospital and again at six weeks, three months, and six months later.

Patients, caregivers, doctors, and people working in community health gave input on the study.

What were the limits of the study?

This study took place in one state. Findings may differ in other places.

In future studies, researchers could look at other programs that help improve social and emotional problems for children with accidental injuries.

How can people use the results?

Hospitals and doctors can use these results when looking for ways to help parents talk to their child after an injury.

To learn more about this project, visit www.pcori.org/Ramirez247.