Metabolism

Letter to the Editor

Stress during childhood and adolescence: how to combat?

To the Editor:

I read with much interest the published manuscript entitled "Metabolic consequences of stress during childhood and adolescence" by Pervanidou and Chrousos [1]. The authors have rightly cited facts regarding the potential damage to cardiovascular, nervous, endocrine, and reproductive systems due to the ongoing stress in the critical period of life. I wish to share few scientific facts on this related topic.

In this competitive world, everyone is under physical stress. The best thing is to curb stress before it manifests fully. In this context, one important step may be proper monitoring of the stress hormones. It is pertinent to mention that a recent research study conducted on elite male junior soccer players looked into the adrenocorticotropic hormone, growth hormone, and cortisol levels [2]. The same study described performance, mood, and hormone levels as valid parameters to diagnose nonfunctional overreaching [2].

All diseases like diabetes mellitus, atherosclerosis, hypertension, and obesity may be linked to oxidative stress. In the oxidative stress, there is excess production of reactive oxygen species. Reactive oxygen species damages the cells and tissues. It also has an impact on metabolism. It is unfortunate that many children do not have adequate antioxidants to combat this oxidative stress. An important question asked is the awareness of the dietary foods rich in antioxidants.

The prevailing atmosphere under which a child is reared may also influence the stress level in the child. A research study described the role of parent-infant interactions in the activation of the infant stress response system [3]. Research studies have also described trauma exposure (including experiencing dysfunctional parenting when a child) and posttraumatic stress disorder along with childhood addiction as the main factors of childhood stress [4]. The setting at home and at schools may be different. The children may behave differently at either place. A terrifying teacher or strict parent may make the life of a child more stressful. The most effective way to handle stress is to have clinical psychologists in the schools and colleges. Many of the institutions have adequate counselors and psychologists to treat childhood stress. I agree with the authors in having regular hormonal check for individuals who are suspected to be under stress. Stress-relieving sessions have to be conducted frequently at school and college levels. International health bodies should come forward to handle childhood stress. A lot has to be done in developing countries. I really appreciate the authors and editor for publishing such an important article. I conclude with the famous Chinese proverb: "Tension is who you think you should be. Relaxation is who you are."

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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