

Relation of Callous-Unemotional Traits to Length of Stay Among Youth Hospitalized at a State Psychiatric Inpatient Facility

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Abstract We examined the association of callous-unemotional (C/U) traits with length of psychiatric hospitalization among two samples each with 50 participants: a group of 7–11 year-olds (39 males and 11 females) receiving services on a children’s unit, and a group of 12–17 year-olds (27 males and 23 females) receiving services on an adolescent unit. Our analyses focused on the additionally predictive value of C/U traits above and beyond the influence of pre-established risk factors for length of stay, including age, gender, ethnicity, overall levels of functioning and psychopathology, and the diagnosis of a Conduct Disorder or Oppositional Defiant Disorder. In both samples, hierarchic regression analyses indicated that C/U traits were associated with longer lengths of stay, whereas none of the previously identified risk factors were significant. The discussion of these results focuses on the importance of developing non-coercive and non-confrontational therapeutic treatment regimens for youth with C/U traits receiving inpatient psychiatric services.

Keywords Length of stay · Callous-unemotional traits · Child behavior problems · Child psychiatry · Treatment

Introduction

In the United States there has been an recent emphasis on decreasing the lengths of stay of youth receiving psychiatric services for a variety of reasons that include the financial cost of such treatment [1–3], overcrowding on inpatient units [4], and the desire to better honor the legal principle of providing care within the least restrictive environment [5]. Given these concerns, there is a need to more accurately identify the clinical characteristics of the

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