

Disciplinary Spanking Gets a Bum Rap

Written by American College of Pediatricians
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Gainesville, Florida – July 12, 2012 - With the release of a biased report in the journal Pediatrics implying that spanking causes mental disorders, researcher Afifi continues the all-too-common unscientific assault on disciplinary spanking.

By studying the experience of "harsh physical punishment" defined as "pushed, grabbed, shoved, slapped, or hit by their parents," Afifi discovered a small association (not causation) with mental disorders in adults. The survey used to gather the data never asked about "spanking" and never limited the experience to that of a defiant child who may have received an ordinary spanking. Yet, the researchers conclude that all physical punishment (including spanking) "should not be used with children of any age."

Furthermore, participants in the study were most likely recalling experiences as teens, since retrospective reports correlate highest with events occurring at this age. Adolescence is certainly not a recommended age for the use of any physical punishment.

The researchers gloss over their finding that "individuals with a family history of dysfunction were more likely to experience harsh physical punishment." That is a better explanation for this association than the one they postulate. It is well known that the use of harsh discipline is often a marker for trouble families and such an unhealthy environment takes its toll on a child.

So, the researchers study the inappropriate use of harsh physical punishment used at

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inappropriate ages within dysfunctional families, and state that all spanking should be prohibited. The American College of Pediatricians calls upon researchers and medical publishers to stop this unwarranted assault and return to evidence-based research. Visit www.Best4Children.org for details on the appropriate use of disciplinary spanking.

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The American College of Pediatricians is a national medical association of licensed physicians and healthcare professionals who specialize in the care of infants, children, and adolescents. The mission of the College is to enable all children to reach their optimal physical and emotional health and well-being. For more information about the College, please visit our website www.Best4Children.org.