

## **PRESENTATION PROPOSAL**

Katia Reinert, PhD | [reinertk@gc.adventist.org](mailto:reinertk@gc.adventist.org) | 301-680-6716 (office)

General Conference Health Ministries

12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20708

### **ABSTRACT**

The presentation will discuss research data on the prevalence of child abuse among 10,283 Seventh-day Adventists in North America, including the impact of childhood trauma on health risk behaviors, negative mental and physical health, and spiritual distress. Protective factors for survivors and the role of the church in abuse prevention and resilience among survivors will be explored.

*The Impact of Child Abuse and Neglect on health risk behaviors and the mental, physical, and spiritual health of Survivors.*

Childhood trauma has been documented as a predictor of negative mental/physical health, as well as adverse health risk behaviors among survivors. While childhood trauma - including child abuse, neglect, and exposure to parental intimate partner violence (IPV)- is linked to a range of negative health outcomes and behaviors, not all survivors develop such adverse results. This presentation will discuss the results of a cross-sectional study of 10,283 Seventh-day Adventists in North America who experienced childhood trauma before age 18. These adult survivors shared their experience through a self-report part of the Behavioral, Religion and Health Study – a subgroup of the Adventist Health Study-2. The presentation will also include studies showing the link of childhood trauma to risky health behaviors such as drug, alcohol and tobacco use.

1. Prevalence of childhood trauma among SDA survivors, including child abuse (sexual, physical, mental), child neglect, and witnessing abuse between parents.
2. Differences in prevalence of abuse among blacks, whites, men and women.
3. Associations of the above categories of childhood trauma to mental and physical health of survivors.
4. Association of childhood trauma and health risk behaviors among survivors of adverse childhood experiences.
5. Protective factors related to spirituality and religiosity among Adventist survivors including forgiveness, gratitude, positive religious coping, and negative religious coping.
6. The role of the Adventist church as a healing community in the prevention of abuse and in building resilience among survivors.

The presentation concludes that: 1) the prevalence of childhood trauma (child abuse, neglect and witnessing parental abuse) among Adventists is comparable or higher than the general population; 2) adult survivors of childhood trauma experienced worse mental health, physical health and more health risk behaviors than those who did not experience abuse; 3) those with higher use of negative religious coping experienced worse mental, physical health; 4) higher levels of gratitude, positive religious coping, forgiveness, and spirituality as measured by intrinsic religiosity, acted as protective factors in reducing the negative effect of childhood trauma on the mental health of Adventist survivors.

Based on these conclusions, the Adventist church has an important role in prevention of abuse and in building survivor resilience among its members and among the community at large.

## REFERENCES

- Felitti VJ, Anda RF, Nordenberg D, Williamson DF, Spitz AM, Edwards V, Koss MP, Marks JS. (1998). [Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: the adverse childhood experiences \(ACE\) study](#). *Am J Prev Med.*;14:245–258.
- Reinert, K., Campbell, J., Bandeen-Roche, K., Sharps, P., & Lee, J. (July, 2015), Gender and Race Variations of the Intersection between Religious Involvement, Early Trauma and Adult Health. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 47(4), 318-327. Epub June 28, 2015. doi: 10.1111/jnu.12144. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=10.1111%2Fjnu.12144>.
- Reinert, K., Campbell, J., Bandeen-Roche, K., Szanton, S., & Lee, J (Sep, 2016) The role of religious involvement in the relationships between early trauma and health outcomes among adult survivors. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Trauma*, 9, 231-241. doi:10.1007/s40653-015-0067-7. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=10.1007%2Fs40653-015-0067-7>
- Remigio-Baker, RA., Hayes, DK., Reyes-Salvail, F. (Dec, 2014). Adverse childhood events and current depressive symptoms among women in Hawaii: 2010 BRFSS, Hawaii. *Maternal Child Health Journal*. 18 (10): 2300-8. DOI [10.1007/s10995-013-1374-y](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-013-1374-y).
- Strine TW, Edwards VK, Dube SR, Wagenfeld M, Dhingra S, Prehn AW, Rasmussen S, Mcknight-Eily L, Croft JB.(2012) [The mediating sex-specific effect of psychological distress on the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and current smoking among adults](#). *Subst Abuse Treat Prev Policy*. 7:30.