

P-971 - CAN MEMORIAL JOURNEYS CAUSE POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER?

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Introduction: In Israel every year approximately 20% of the high school senior students travel to Poland to the “holocaust memorial journey”. They are escorted by a life witness (a holocaust survivor). They enter concentration camps, are encouraged to investigate and share historical survivor stories of family members. The journey is considered an emotional stressor. Reports of both adolescents and escorts stress the “personal and real like quality” that the journey gives to the horrific historical facts. Different aspects of the journey raise public dispute in Israel. One of the issues that critiques raise is the possible induction of mental health problems and specifically PTSD.

Objective: To study the occurrence of severe mental health consequences occurring after the adolescent “holocaust memorial journey”. Can the journey help differentiate between a severe stressor and a traumatic event?

Methods: A survey about the experience of child and adolescent psychiatrists in Israel was done. Participants were asked about the scope of their professional activity especially their experience with referrals after the holocaust memorial journey.

Results: Fifty Child and Adolescent psychiatrists (approximately 30% of all child and adolescent psychiatrists in Israel) participated. Though they reported more mental health disorders than after other high school journeys, most were exacerbation of preexisting conditions. There was only one report of post traumatic stress disorder.

Conclusion: The holocaust memorial journey is a major stressor, but is not a traumatic event.