

# Psychological Trauma, Stress and Violence: Consequences for Health and Well-being

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# Ph.D. Thesis

- Childhood sexual abuse and Public Health
  - Consequences for Health and Well-Being and developing a Holistic, Person Centered Interdisciplinary Therapy
- Co-workers: Dr. Sigríður Halldórsdóttir
  - Dr. Sóley S. Bender
  - Dr. Berglind Guðmundsdóttir
  - Dr. Guðrún Agnarsdóttir

# My Researches

- Repressed and silent suffering: consequences of childhood sexual abuse for women's health and well-being:  
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1471-6712.2012.01049.x/abstract>
- Deep and almost unbearable suffering: consequences of childhood sexual abuse for men's health and well-being:  
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1471-6712.2012.00981.x/abstract>
- Consequences of childhood sexual abuse for health and well-being: Gender similarities and differences:
  - Submitted in Scandinavian Journal of Public Health
- Description and evaluation of the wellness program for female childhood sexual abuse survivors: A person-centered, holistic, interdisciplinary, intervention project

# NORIA-Net Arctic – Input from the Health Expert Group.

- Food and Water Security Across the Arctic including availability, accessibility and safety
- ***To live in uncertainty of impacts of climate change, a stressor for well-being and mental health***
- The influence large scale development projects have on health as the political and economical interests for the region increase
- Capacity building in and together with communities in health and in health care delivery in the periphery
- Surveillance of infectious diseases in the Arctic; development of new methods involving communities
- Presentation of indicators of acceptance by the Arctic countries for surveillance in areas as food and water security, infectious diseases, wildlife
- ***Safety living in the Arctic – effects of new livelihoods including trauma and violence***
- ***Surveillance of special cohorts as pregnant women and newborns with emphasis on environmental influences***
- Exposure to toxic substances through food, water, indoor climate and outdoor air pollution
- ***Violence - accidents and suicides***

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# Psychological Trauma

- A person can experience a psychological trauma when he/she experiences circumstances where he/she is in danger or witnesses fear full incident, where death or near death occur, serious injury, threat to his/her own health or others. The trauma can affect the person so strong that he/she can't get away from pain full emotions from it.
  - (Scaer, 2001)

# Psychological Trauma

- Death and divorce
- Violence, sexual abuse, bullying
- Being the victim of an alcoholic parent or close family member
- Serious and long-term illness
- Accident
- Life-threatening medical conditions
- Medication-induced trauma
- Catastrophic events such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and flood
- War or other mass violence
- Long-term exposure to situations such as extreme poverty or milder forms of abuse, such as verbal abuse
- Losing something – job, home, health, body part ...

# Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

- PTSD is a severe anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to any event which results in psychological trauma. It may involve the threat of death to oneself or to someone else, or to one's own or someone else's
- Diagnose of PTSD include
- re-experiencing the original trauma(s) through flashbacks or nightmares
  - avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma
  - increased arousal – such as difficulty falling or staying asleep, anger and hyper-vigilance
    - (American Psychiatric Association, 1994)

# Secondary health effects of climate change

- Those that occur as a result of environmental or human behavioral change that are mediated by climate
- These include social and mental stress related to changes in environment or lifestyle brought about by changes in climate
- The stress of not knowing the extent of the effect of climate change can cause illness and disease
- All these events will challenge the traditional subsistence way of life for many communities and lead to accelerated and long term cultural change which will create additional stress on an already vulnerable population
- Such storm events also place residents at higher risk for unintentional injury and for chronic stress
- Fear for safety and security will have long-term effects on mental and behavioral health in these communities

# Secondary health effects of climate change

- This however deserves attention considering that WHO estimates that approximately 25 % of deaths in children under the age of 5 are caused by environmental factors (WHO 2008).
- The effects of climate change and environmental pollution on the next generation could be profound with the most sensitive members of the population being the fetus, newborns, children and women of reproductive age (Rylander et al 2011).

# Tertiary health effects of climate change

- Dislocated families and communities will have to adapt to new ways of living, may face unemployment, and will have to integrate and create new social bonds.
- Relocation may also lead to rapid loss of traditional culture, exacerbating stressors and mental health challenges.
- The stress of acculturation to new adoptive communities can be lonely and difficult, precipitating depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and suicide.

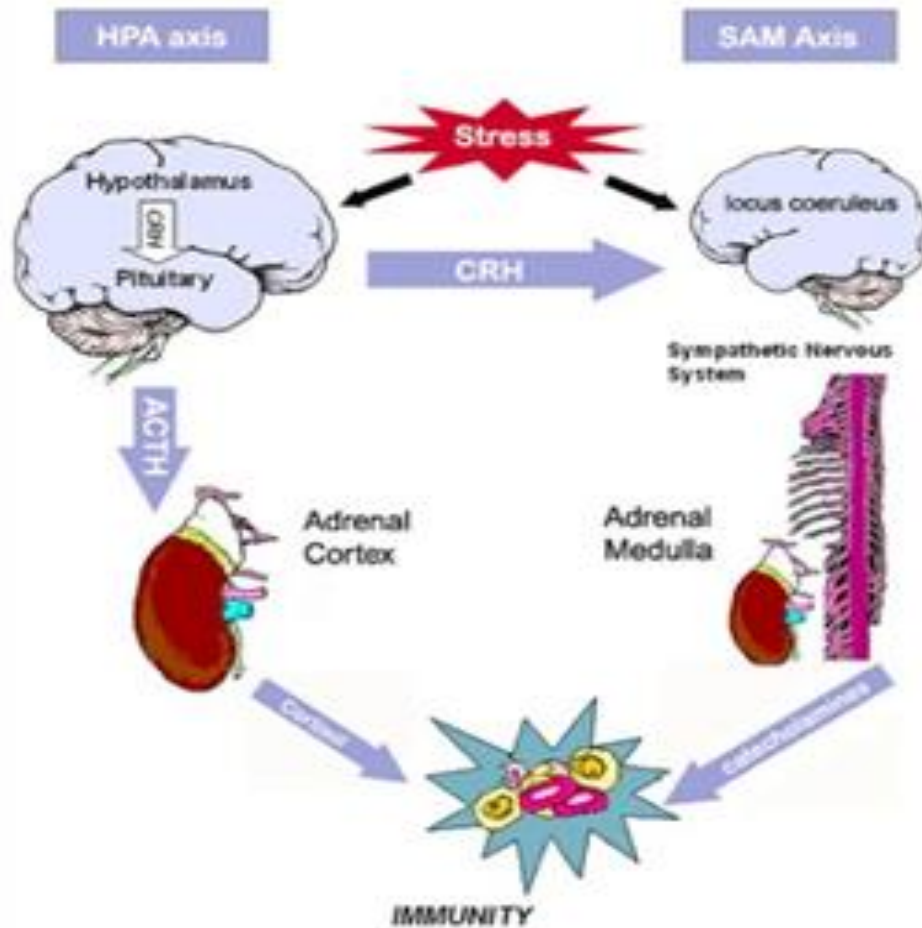
# The mind, body and soul

- Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI)
  - Dynamic and complex interactions among behavioral factors, the central nervous system and the endocrine and immune systems
  - Every human being is a total whole, body and soul, what breaks down the soul also breaks down the body and there is no real distinction between soul and body because of the communication between the brain and the nervous system, endocrine and immune system
- Dissociation - Flashback
- Fight – flight - FREEZE
- Boundaries

# Trauma and health

- Psychological Trauma – Experience – Tension
- Brain – Shock
- Nervous system – Response
- Hormone system – Activity
- Breathing – Heart – Skin – Digestive – Muscles
- Loosing sleep - Tension
- Fear - Insecurity
- Anxiety - Depression
- Chronic stress
- Muscle strain - Chronic pain
- Over active response system – Unable to relax
- Hormone system - Nervous system - Confusion

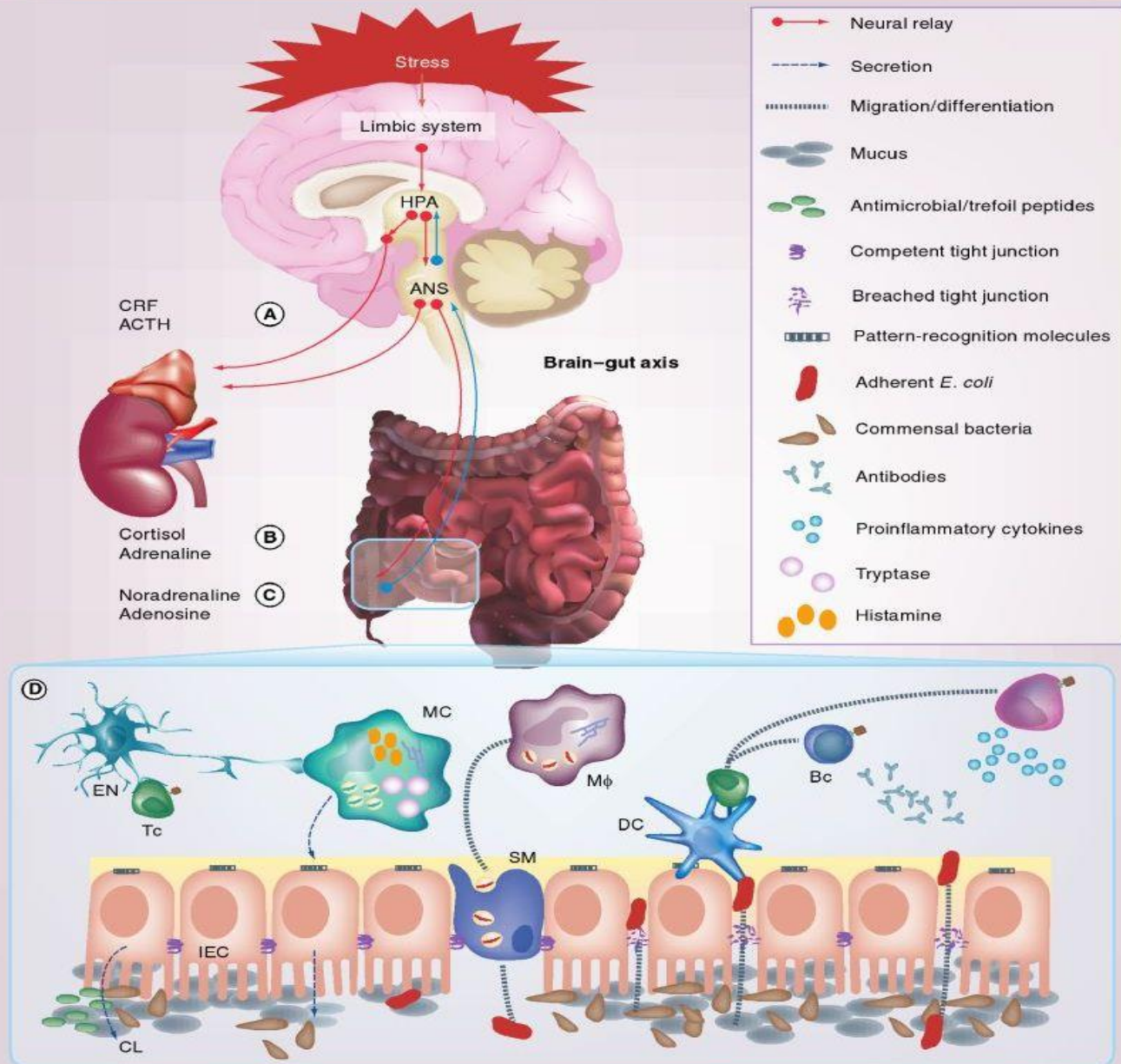
# Mind, body and soul



(Thorton & Andersen, 2006)

# Trauma and health

- Psychological trauma - PTSD
- PTSD – Chronic stress
- Chronic stress – Suppressed immune system
- Immune system - Defense diseases
- Immune system – Infection and inflammation
- Immune system – Cancer



Expert Rev. Gastroenterol. Hepatol. © Future Science Group (2009)

Source: Expert Rev Gastroenterol Hepatol © 2009 Expert Reviews Ltd

# Health and well-being

- Musculoskeletal – Chronic pain, fibromyalgia, arthritis
- Nerves and hormones – tremor, numbness, fatigue
- Cardiovascular – blood pressure
- Digestive – gastro intestinal problem, obesity
- Respiratory – Asthma,
- Sex- and urology – Transmitted sexual disease
- Mental health – Depression, anxiety, phobia
- Self destructive behavior – alcohol, drug, food, suicide
- Relationship problems – spouse, children and family

