

José Rocha<sup>1,2</sup>, Mariana Negrão<sup>2,3</sup>, Elisa Veiga<sup>2,3</sup>, André Moreira<sup>2,4</sup>, Brigitte Lueger-Schuster<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Instituto Universitário de Ciências da Saúde, CESPU; <sup>2</sup>Centro de Psicologia do Trauma e do Luto, CPTL; <sup>3</sup>Universidade Católica do Porto; <sup>4</sup>Universidade do Porto; <sup>5</sup>Vienna University

## INTRODUCTION

The need for children's assessment of traumatic exposure has been an extraordinary field of research that provided relevant knowledge on the impact of traumatic events. Mainly in severe or specific traumatic events, data have been gathered with several instruments. However, the use of these instruments in low risk samples pose an ethical reflection if generating a dangerous world assumption in children can have important negative side effects.

## OBJECTIVES

This new instrument aims the assessment of traumatic exposure, safe as possible, for low risk children aged between 7 and 17. It intends also to promote competent epidemiological research while counterbalancing potential negative effects of dangerous world assumptions in low risk children.

## METHOD

This new scale has two levels, one for exposure between 7 and 12 years old and the other for exposure between 13 and 17. It was developed considering the potential negative impact of each item. Several researchers, victims and organizations discussed each item considering its meaning, degree of activation on non-exposed children and linguistic adequacy. There were three pilot applications with young low-risk children with 7 and 8 years old to clarify complexity and each item activation. The structure is based on International Trauma Exposure Measure for adults but differentiating contexts of exposure: family/care and school/community. It was written in both Portuguese (from Portugal and from Brazil) and English (from UK).

## RESULTS

The final version of the scale has 36 items of traumatic or adverse events and a final item to reflect in positive life events with an intention to decrease activation levels. An extra question is included about the potential need for professional help. As in the adult version, there are additional questions about the exposure history and emotions associated.

1. You have or had a very serious illness.	13. Someone asked you to show or touch intimate or private areas of the body.	25. You felt shamed, ridiculed or humiliated at school or elsewhere.
2. Someone close to you has or had a very serious illness.	14. Someone forced you to show or touch private or intimate areas of the body.	26. You have seen people attack your home or shoot at someone.
3. You received a really frightening medical treatment or examination.	15. Someone forced you to have intimate contact with them which you found uncomfortable	27. Someone threatened to seriously hurt you at school or in another place outside your home.
4. A friend or family member died unexpectedly or in a terrible way.	16. You have felt unloved, ignored, rejected, isolated or worthless in the family.	28. You were attacked deliberately or seriously injured (such by hitting, shaking, burning, choking, stabbing, or shooting at you) at school or elsewhere.
5. You were directly involved in a serious accident (e.g., car accident, bicycle accident, fall, animal attack, fire).	17. You have felt shamed, ridiculed or humiliated by family members.	29. Someone has mugged you or grabbed you to rob you.
6. You saw a serious accident in which you were not directly involved (e.g., car accident, bicycle accident, fall, animal attack, fire)	18. You heard people in your family say very unkind words and shout at each other.	30. You have directly experienced a war situation.
7. You were involved in a natural disaster (flood, typhoon, earthquake, or forest fire) in which you felt your life was in danger.	19. You saw people in your family fight or attack each other.	31. You have seen someone experience extreme pain or death.
8. You were involved in a man-made disaster (e.g., terrorist attack, chemical spill, public shooting) in which you felt your life was in danger.	20. Someone in your family threatened to seriously hurt you.	32. You have felt afraid because you were being stalked or followed, including social media or online.
9. You had to stay away from your parents or family for a long period of time, e.g. because you were in hospital or in a foster care place.	21. In your family people attacked you or tried to deliberately or seriously hurt you.	33. Someone in your family had an addiction problem (for example, with alcohol, drugs or gambling)
10. One of your parents was not around for a long period of time and this was upsetting for you.	22. You were punished physically in an excessive way.	34. Someone in your family had a serious mental illness.
11. The police came to your house and told you that you or your family were in trouble.	23. You felt unloved, ignored, rejected, isolated or worthless at school or elsewhere.	35. You did not have your basic needs met such having enough to eat, housing or clothes to wear.
12. During your childhood one of your parents was in jail.	24. You felt shamed, ridiculed or humiliated in social media or online	36. Any other event not listed (please specify) _____

## CONCLUSIONS

This is a new instrument for assessment of traumatic exposure in children that was developed with sensitive awareness of the impact of exposure questions in low risk children. This effort may pave the way to more frequent screening approaches and proper epidemiological research, not through retrospective data. This team is working on the translation for other languages and are open to expand the level of pan European collaboration.

Acknowledgements: The authors would like to acknowledge the support from Flávia Osório (USP, Brazil) and Siobhan Henley (NHS, Wales) for a posteriori and important work in consolidation of the both initial translations