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Undetected and Unvoiced

University of Dayton

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NEWS

Thursday July 28, 2016

Undetected and Unvoiced

Every minute in the United States, one person will have a heart attack, two will suffer strokes, and three women will nearly bleed to death while giving birth.

Behind the statistics from the Centers for Disease Control, Scott and Michelle Hall say there is a need not being met by the health care industry: the emotional toll.

“While the sheer numbers of medical experiences are certainly staggering, it can be downright overwhelming to think about the psychological implications of such traumas, emergencies and life-threatening/life-altering diagnoses for patients and their families,” they write in their forthcoming book, *Managing the Psychological Impact of Medical Trauma: A Guide for Mental Health and Healthcare Professionals*.

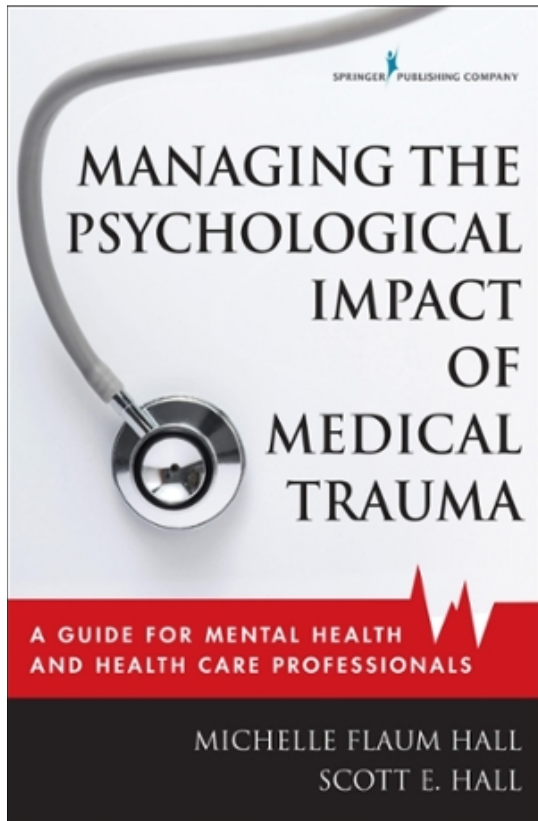
“So overwhelming, in fact, that for many the emotional costs of medical experiences often go undetected, untreated and unvoiced.”

The book, just released by Springer Publishing, is the first to describe best practices for treating medical trauma in health care settings.

Scott Hall, associate professor of counselor education and human services at the University of Dayton, and Michelle Flaum Hall, a graduate of the University of Dayton's counselor education program and an associate professor in counseling at Xavier University, say the idea came from their own experiences as professionals and as patients.

“Health care has really become a team sport, in a sense. But what we have seen is mental health is still sometimes separated, or even absent,” Michelle Flaum Hall said.

“We want to put the need for mental and emotional well-being on the radar for health care professionals and for patients,” Scott Hall added. “It starts with awareness.”



Their book offers models for how to bring mental health professionals into the treatment team to ensure patients' emotional health isn't on the backburner. It also includes assessment tools to help doctors and nurses recognize signs of stress in patients and their families.

"In medicine, it's often only about doing the surgery, making sure this person is healing properly and getting the right medication," Michelle Flaum Hall said. "There's nothing that says, 'You might really struggle emotionally following this surgery. Here are some signs of depression or anxiety and here are the resources that can help you.'"

"Patients can suffer what we call a secondary crisis," Scott Hall said. "A traumatic event can impact them in terms of their careers, their relationships and in developmental milestones. And sometimes that impact might not show up for three months, six months, 12 months."

Michelle Flaum Hall said her emotional needs were not addressed after she nearly died while giving birth. She said while that was an obvious trauma, there are other traumatic medical experiences that

often go unaddressed.

"Any kind of medical experience can be medical trauma if it's traumatic for the patient," she said. "That's very patient focused, rather than us classifying what is and isn't medical trauma.

"We need to have interventions and assessment tools in place so we can begin to identify this and help patients."

More information is on the book is available online from [Springer Publishing](#).

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