



The Forgotten Children

**A major European Conference
addressing the subject of Children
of parents with a mental illness**

**Vilnius, Lithuania
26th and 27th November 2009**



Scientific Director: J. Tsiantis
Prof. Of Child Psychiatry

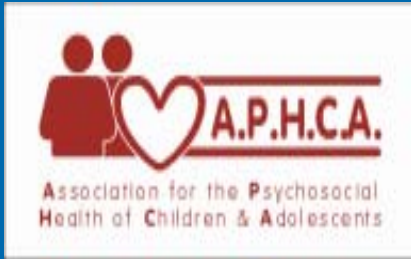
“Melia” a home for children with parents who have mental disturbances

**“Melia was one of the three nymphs who nursed the infant
Zeus with honey and milk in the Cretan cave of Dicte,
when his mother entrusted him to them”**

J. Tsiantis
Professor of Child Psychiatry
Scientific Director of the Association
for the Psychosocial Health of Children
Psychotherapy
& Adolescents (A.P.H.C.A.)
Chairman of the European Union of Medical
Center
Specialists (UEMS).

D. Savvoglou
MA Psychologist
Member of the Hellenic Institute
of Psychoanalytic
of Children and Adolescents
Psychologist of the “Melia”

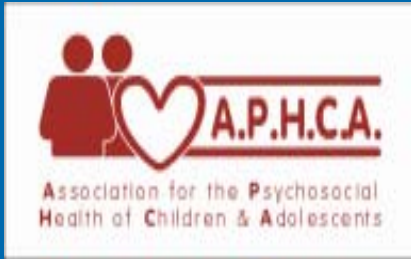
A.P.H.C.A., Athens²



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Etiological factors:

- the genetic factors (heredity),
- the environmental influences,
- the direct exposure to their parents' symptoms who have mental illness,
- the influence of correlated mediating factors, such as disturbed marital relations or inter – partner violence, after the onset of mental illness and
- the disruptions to parenting

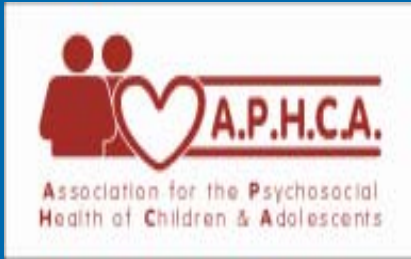


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Parental Mental Illness Effects on Children

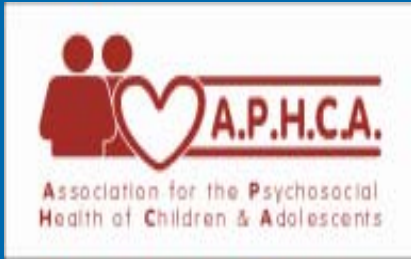
The direct effect of the exposure to the symptom of the Mental illness seems to occur especially in those cases in which:

- o direct effect of parents to their child may the parents neglect their children because of their mental illness,
- o the children may be victimized by experiencing aggressiveness and violence or
- o the children may become a target of delusional behavior



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- The children may abandon the effort and therefore develop psychic mechanisms of dissociation of the external world. In this way, they may appear to be “good and obedient” or distant and catatonic children.
- Other children may develop strategies of getting the attention of their parents in a negative way, like having over mobility, excitement and impulsive behavior.
- On the other hand, other children become young carers and they take it for granted that they will play a parental role for their parents.



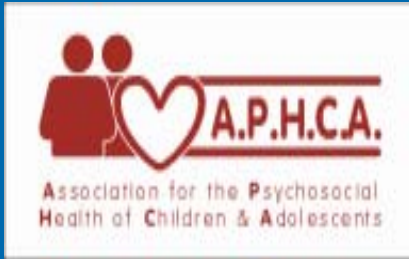
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Further effects on Children

Parental Behavior

Potential impact on child (in addition to attachment problems)

Self – preoccupation	Neglected
Emotional unavailability	Out of control, Self-reliant, Neglected, Exposed to danger
Frequent separations	Anxious, Perplexed, Angry, Neglected
Threats of abandonment	Anxious, Inhibited, Self-blame



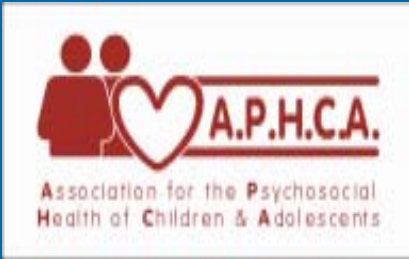
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Further effects on Children

**Parental Behavior
attachment**

**Potential impact on child
(in addition to
problems)**

Unpredictable/chaotic planning	Anxious, Inhibited, Neglected
Irritability/over-reactions	Inhibited, Physically abused
Distorted expectations of reality	Anxious, Confused
Strange behavior/beliefs	Embroided in behavior, Shame, Perplexed, Physically abused



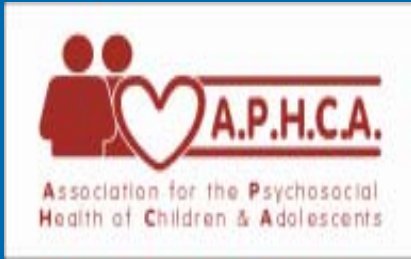
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Further effects on Children

**Parental Behavior
 attachment**

**Potential impact on child
 (in addition to
 problems)**

Dependency	Caretaker role
Pessimism/blames self	Caretaker role, Depressed, Low self-esteem
Blames child	Emotionally abused, Physically abused, Guilt
Unsuccessful limit-setting	Behaviour problem



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Further effects on Children

Parental Behavior
attachment

Potential impact on child
(in addition to
problems)

Marital discord and hostility	Behavior problems, Anxiety, Self-blame
Social deterioration	Neglect, Shame