

JOINT EVENT

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Specific biomarkers in women with self-injurious behavior: A clue for screening out female prisoners at risk

Introduction: Deliberate self-injury may lead to medical complications and increased suicide risk. It is a specifically serious issue regarding women in prison who have higher rates as compared with the general self-injurious female population. Therefore, professionals are searching for measures to prevent these harmful acts in prisons (and outside). Since self-injurious behavior is influenced by genetic factors, efforts have been made to find related biological markers in order to identify the specific individuals who will eventually harm themselves and to prevent the onset of this practice, but so far to no avail. In order to identify relevant biomarkers, the current research adopts dermatoglyphic methods. Dermatoglyphic is the scientific study of the skin configurations on fingers and palms, employed in medicine, genetics and psychobiology. Numerous studies have reported that unusual dermatoglyphics are associated with specific medical and psychological disorders (e.g., psychoses). Since skin configurations are hereditary, dermatoglyphics may provide clues to the detection of a disposition for self-injury before the very first self-harming act is inflicted.

Methods: Prints were obtained from (non-prisoner) women who injure themselves and compared with a control group.

Results: The research group is characterized by a distinctive set of sixteen uncommon dermatoglyphic features.

Conclusions: The forensic implication of the study is straightforward. The criminal fingerprint records of all self-injurious female prisoners in a state are available for research, which eventually could lay the groundwork for a non-invasive method of identifying female prisoners at risk, in combination with currently used tools for risk assessment.

Biography

Israel Oron has completed his PhD degree in Psychology from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (where his MA studies included a program in Psycho-Genetics). He was a Post-doctoral Scholar at the Institute of Criminology, Hebrew University. He has joined the Israeli Police HQ as a Psychologist in the Department of Criminal Investigations, conducting personality assessments of potential perpetrators of serious crimes. In addition, he did psychological evaluations in cases of missing persons, and of deaths in unclear circumstances. He also served on the steering committee of the National Program for Suicide Prevention, during its three year pilot phase. Presently, he is working as a private Psychologist.

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