Today’s piece was prepared by Kristine Karvonen, MD, based on a Newswide article [Study Explains Link Between Academic Performance and Violence](https://www.newswise.com/articles/study-explains-link-between-academic-performance-and-violence)

This news article summarizes an article published by a group at Northwestern University this year that finds a higher level of cortisol and lower number of hours of sleep the day following a violent crime committed near the homes of children in comparison with areas where there is no violent crime committed. An existing link between violence, sleep, and school performance has been established in the past, but a cause has not yet been identified. Both the news and scientific article suggest cortisol could be a potential biological explanation for poor school performance in children that are exposed to violence. The methods of the scientific article were discussed: over a period of four days, the children kept sleep diaries, wore activity tracking devices, and their saliva was collected three times a day to measure cortisol levels. In order to collect information regarding violent crimes, the researchers recorded crimes reported to police in the city where the study was held. Possible political implications were insinuated but unfortunately were not expounded upon. It was mentioned future policies should focus on deterring violence in order to improve student performance in low-income neighborhoods and perhaps focus on supporting student stress coping skills. Several individuals are quoted in the article who appear to either hold professional degrees in development or social policy. The article appears to be scientifically based, given that it summarizes an article published in *Child Development* titled Violence and Vigilance: The Acute Effects of Community Violent Crime on Sleep and Cortisol. However, the article fails to critique the article and offer an opposing argument. Particularly the fact that the study has low power due to an exceedingly low number of participants, n=82.

**RESOURCE ON VIOLENCE EXPOSURE:**

[Youth and Family Behavioral Health support](http://www.youtheastsideservices.org/teens/) *Youth Eastside Services resource*

[Crisis Support](https://depts.washington.edu/dbpeds/Resources.html#section4_textarea35_heading) *A variety of resources, available via a Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics website*

* *Reference:* [Heissel, J. et al. (2017), Violence and Vigilance: The Acute Effects of Community Violent Crime on Sleep and Cortisol. *Child Development*. doi: 10.1111/cdev.12889](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cdev.12889/full)

And that’s today’s Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics: IN THE NEWS!