Case Studies in Child Maltreatment

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Current Statistics

- 50,000 deaths from child abuse in the U.S.
- 25 million reports of child abuse in the U.S.
- 26,686 reports of child abuse in the year 2001 in the state of Virginia (39,507 victims)
- 29 deaths from child abuse in the year 2001 in the state of Virginia

Current Legislation

- Mandated reporters are required to report.
  - Physicians, teachers, daycare workers, probation officers...
- Permissive reporting allows anyone to make a report.
- Immunity is granted to the reporter unless malice can be proven.

Demographics of Child Abuse

- 75% of founded child abuse cases are committed by parents
- 4% occur outside of the family setting
- Neglect accounts for 50% of founded cases
- Physical abuse accounts for 25% of founded cases
- Sexual abuse accounts for 15% of founded cases

Risk factors of the child

- Prematurity
- Intense behavior such as excessive crying, acute or chronic illness
- Abnormal intellectual development
- Psychiatric problems
- Unwanted pregnancy

Profile of the Abuser

- Substance abuse
- Stress from job loss or financial burdens
- Social isolation without a support system
- Abuse and violence in the home
- Unrealistic expectations of the child
- Obsessive-compulsive traits
Child Abuse Regulations

- Defined by state not federal law
- Variability from state to state
- Imminent risk clause
- Child Protective Service Hotline 24/7 1-800-552-7096
- Referred to jurisdiction in which abuse occurs
- CPS required to respond within 72 hours

Clinical Signs in Child Physical Abuse

Soft tissue injuries

- The most common marker of physical abuse is a bruise:
  - Ecchymoses
  - Hematomas
  - Contusions
  - Abrasions lacerations
  - Burns
  - Human bites

Mortality and Morbidity in Child Abuse:

- Head Trauma
- Abdominal Trauma
- Burns

Characteristics of Soft Tissue Injury

- Location
- Age of Injury
- Morphology
Conditions That Mimic Child Abuse:

Mongolian Spots

Coining

Cupping

Moxibustion
Types of Burns Consistent with Abuse

- Immersion Burns
  - Stocking
  - Glove
  - Perineum
    - Central Sparing
- Contact Burns
- Cigarette Burns

Suspicious Burns

- Delay in seeking treatment > 2 hours
- Burn appears older than stated age
- The accident was not witnessed
- A sibling is accused of being responsible
- The burn is second or third degree
Shaken Baby Syndrome

- Whiplash Shaken Infant Syndrome
  - Coined by Caffey in 1974 in landmark article
  - Noted constellation of fractures, subdural hematomas and retinal hemorrhages
- Shaken Baby Syndrome
  - Shaken Impact Syndrome
- Inflicted or abusive head trauma

Presenting Symptoms of SBS

- Poor feeding
- Vomiting
- Lethargy
- Irritability
- Seizure
- Coma
- Death

Shaken Baby Syndrome

- Subdural or subarachnoid hemorrhages
- Cerebral edema
- Retinal hemorrhages
- Skull fractures or scalp contusions
- Skeletal fractures
- Spinal cord injuries

Age Range for SBS

- Peak incidence of crying in infants 6 weeks - 4 months
- Peak incidence of SBS 6 weeks - 4 months
- Not uncommon from 0 - 2 years
- Uncommon but occurs 3 - 5 years
- Shaken Adult Syndrome

Victims of SBS

- %70 have evidence of prior abuse

- %33 have evidence of prior intracranial injury
Mortality and Morbidity of SBS

- 25% mortality rate
- Wide range of morbidity
- Unknown denominator

Evidence of External Trauma

- Bruising on the head from impact
- Bruising on the arms or chest wall from tightly gripping the baby
- External evidence is present in only fifty percent of cases
- External evidence is not predictive of outcome

Severity of Brain Injury

- Rate of acceleration
- Duration or number of shakes

Inflicted Abdominal Injuries

- Ruptured liver or spleen
- Intestinal perforation
- Intramural hematoma of duodenum or proximal jejunum
- Ruptured blood vessel
- Pancreatic injury
- Kidney injury
Inflicted Bone Injuries

- Chip Fractures of Metaphysis
- Bucket Handle Fractures of Metaphysis
- Unusual Fractures (Ribs, Scapula, Sternum)
- Fractures at different stages of healing
- Fractures in non-ambulatory children