Disseminating knowledge of child protection: Helping to help with a nationwide hotline for health professionals

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Prevalences of maltreatment (moderate to severe)

- emotional abuse 6.5%
- physical abuse 6.6%
- sexual abuse 7.6%
- emotional neglect 13.3%
- physical neglect 22.4%

- Any form of maltreatment: 30.8%

Witt, Brown et al. 2017
Background information

• Medical confidentiality

• No mandatory reporting

• No dedicated child abuse physician (pediatricians, pediatric surgery, child and adolescent psychiatry, forensic medicine)

• No mandatory training in child protection

• Federal Child Protection Act 2012 (Act on Cooperation and Information in Child Protection (KKG))
Three steps for protecting children from maltreatment

1. Assess risk and options for prevention
2. Empower families to seek for help themselves
3. Inform Child Protection Services if necessary. Tell parents if possible.
Many questions and uncertainties in child protection cases in the health professions

→ Lack of knowledge:
  • legal framework
  • own resources/options
  • possibilities for counsel
  • possibilities of the Youth Welfare system / communication gap
Building bridges from healthcare to youth welfare

- For all questions in the field of child protection
- For healthcare professionals: physicians, nurses, midwives, psychotherapists, paramedics, occupational / physical therapists etc.
- Physicians with special training in child protection (child and adolescent psychiatrists, pediatricians, forensic physicians)
- Anonymous counsel
- Free of charge
- 24/7
- Nationwide
- Funded by the Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth
Usage of the Hotline

Calls per month

N Calls

0,0 10,0 20,0 30,0 40,0 50,0 60,0 70,0 80,0 90,0


28,3 61,7 55,0 52,3 62,0 70,3 77,3

Medizinische Kinderschutzhotline
0800 19 210 00

Universitäts Klinikum Ulm
Medical Child Protection Hotline

- **Gesamt**
  - Kernel Group: Heilberufe

- **N Calls**
  - Target group
  - All

**Graph Details:**
- **x-axis:** Time (0-23)
- **y-axis:** N Calls (0-140)
- **Lines:**
  - Blue: All
  - Green: Target group

**Contact Information:**
- Medical Child Protection Hotline: 0800 19 210 00
- Universitätsklinikum Ulm
Type of Calls

- Target group: 67.4%
- Wrong number: 2.0%
- Disposed: 2.0%
- Prank call: 0.5%
- Youth welfare: 27.5%
- Non medics: 0.7%

N=1282
### Setting

- No information: 7%
- Others: 11%
- Emergency service: 2%
- Resident medical staff: 26%
- Outpatient Clinic: 7%
- Hospital: 27%
Medical Fields

- Pediatrics: 34.3%
- Child and Adolescent Psychiatry: 31.1%
- Psychiatry: 11.3%
- Dentistry: 4.7%
- Surgery: 2.3%
- Internal Medicine: 2.2%
- Obstetrics and Gynecology (ObGyn): 1.0%
- Pediatric Surgery: 1.0%
- Others: 11.8%

N=817
Medical Fields

Case is patient

Parent is patient
Forms of Maltreatment

- Multiple forms: 12.3%
- Neglect: 24.4%
- Sexual abuse: 30.3%
- Emotional abuse: 11.9%
- Physical abuse: 29.7%

Multiple selection possible
Any contact to other actors in child protection because of this case yet?

- Yes: 80%
- No: 20%
Contents of counselling

- Federal Child Protection Act: 19.0%
- Communication issues: 26.7%
- Welfare and other procedures: 59.0%
- Medical issues: 7.5%
- Legal issues: 17.5%
- Documentation: 16.6%
- Other: 7.8%
- Reference to other contacts: 31.0%
Case 1: Rib fracture

- Call from a pediatrician: 6 m-old baby (routine visit)
- Induration of a right rib palpable, no other findings
- previous visits inconspicuous
- Parents have no explanation the finding

→ What next?
Case 2: Alcohol abuse

- Call from an internist: patient with cirrhosis
- repeatedly admitted because of alcohol-associated diseases
- Patients has 2 children in primary school age, care unclear

➔ What next?
How helpful was the counsel?

- Very helpful: 74.6%
- Partly helpful: 24.0%
- Not so helpful: 1.1%
- Not helpful at all: 0.3%
External Evaluation I

Classification of the findings

- 13.2% of little use
- 86.8% very useful

Further procedure in the case

- 8.6% of little use
- 91.4% very useful

Understanding the child protection system

- 1.1% of little use
- 19.6% some useful stuff
- 79.3% very useful

N = 95
Recommendation to colleagues

100.0%

Yes  No
Increase awareness for child protection
Hotline for health-care professionals who suspect child maltreatment – Germany

Paramedics, psychotherapists, dentists, doctors and nurses all have regular contact with children. This means that amidst their busy daily lives, health-care professionals play an important role in identifying cases of suspected maltreatment and in providing assistance to vulnerable children.

Yet, in the middle of a 12-hour shift, what do you do if you suspect maltreatment but are unsure of what signs to report, how to document them or where to report them?

Professor Jörg M. Fegert from the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry/Psychotherapy at Ulm University in Germany notes...
Thank you!
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