



CPU-Net MEDICAL ALERT

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SCI: Suspicious Child Injury & Death Investigation

The investigation of suspicious child deaths is in its infancy in the Philippines. In the present situation even if the child was brought to the hospital, a suspicious child death may not be reported by the physician for various reasons. Physicians may fail to recognize and report child abuse and may be ignorant of the referral system. The work-up may be limited by prohibitive cost and the question of who will pay for them.

Criminal investigation of a child death caused by a caretaker is also unique for police investigators, since the perpetrator is legally responsible for the child and has continuous access to the victim. This contrasts with the majority of adult homicides where the victim and perpetrator are not living together at the time when the injury causing death is perpetrated. Deaths due to abuse or neglect of children by their parents who are expected to love and provide for the child victim's needs may also be difficult to comprehend for any physician, social worker or police.

In the United States, most suspicious child deaths occur among very young children with 50% of victims under 1 year old. These young victims may have no previous hospital records or their medical records are not accessible to death investigation.

Another major concern in suspicious child death investigation is doing an autopsy. Autopsies of young children require a specialized understanding of pediatrics, pathology, child abuse and forensic investigation. However, most of the autopsies done in our country are conducted by physicians with no formal pathology training, much less specialization in forensic pathology. The issue of consent to an autopsy by next of kin of a child whose primary suspect is the parent or caretaker has already been settled with a Department of Justice Memo instructing prosecutors to issue an "ORDER TO CONDUCT AUTOPSY" upon request by a physician who suspects that the child's death may be due to abuse.

Very few investigators have any training on crime scene investigation in cases of suspicious child death. As a result investigators rely solely on the doctor's report.

All of these factors contribute to inadequate investigation, underreporting, misclassification, and mismanagement of suspicious child deaths. Thus, during the CPU-Net 2004 conference on CSI Philippines, physicians, social workers, law enforcement investigators, members of the judiciary and other child advocates came up with a multi-disciplinary protocol to address the investigation of suspicious child injuries and deaths whether by abuse or neglect. (See back page.)

ANNOUNCEMENT

Roundtable

February 26: Zamboanga City
May 28: Ilocos Norte
August 4: Metro Manila

Annual Conference

Theme: Children with Sexually Aggressive Behavior

Date: November 10 and 11, 2005
Venue: Manila

Visiting Professor:

Dr. Tilman Frniss
Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist
University Hospital Munster
West Germany

SUBMIT YOUR RESEARCH ABSTRACT FOR SAN DIEGO CONFERENCE 2006

CPU-Net members are encouraged to submit research abstracts for presentation at the CPU-Net Annual Conference on November 10 & 11, 2005. One (1) research will be selected among all the entries and will be presented at the San Diego International Conference on Child and Family Maltreatment on January 2006.

Dr. Mariella Castillo, Chair for CPU-Net Posters & Research Committee, will provide guidelines later. Deadline of submission of entries is on 1 August 2005.



A Peaceful New Year!



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MEDICAL DOCTOR, SOCIAL WORKER & LAW ENFORCEMENT PROTOCOL FOR SUSPECTED NONACCIDENTAL INJURY IN CHILDREN

