

Neglect and Physical Abuse of a Vulnerable Epileptic Child

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Abstract: Children are fragile human beings. When they have disability like seizure, they are likely to be very vulnerable and therefore need much more care. They are protected by many international conventions such as the Children rights act of 1989 and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol.

Keywords: Child, rights, life, disability, seizure.

INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization has defined child maltreatment as being: "All forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power" [1].

Abuse and neglect of children is a global problem that has significant consequences for public health. Physical abuse includes acts such as hitting, kicking, baby-shaking or other physical aggression likely to hurt or those that can cause significant harm to a child [2].

Human rights provisions, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has set out children's rights to physical integrity and governments' responsibilities in order to ensure that the children are protected from violence. All reasonable steps are taken to help them in order to overcome adverse consequences [12].

A review of research on the prevalence of child maltreatment has found that the substantiated child maltreatment cases referred each year to child protection services concerned 1 per cent of children in

the population. However, research indicates that physical abuse is experienced by between 4-16 per cent of children per year, 10 per cent of children experience psychological abuse, between 1-15 per cent children is neglected and children between 10-25 per cent experience exposures to domestic violence directed at a parent [3]

CASE REPORT

We report the case of a 7 years old male child suffering from epilepsy diagnosed free years later. As he had very often seizure, his parents used to leave him alone at home. One day, when they left, they closed the door while the child was inside the kitchen warming him-self near a wood-shed. Unfortunately, the child fell into the fire after a seizure. As he was alone, there was no one to rescue him; so he remained in the fire until his parents came back. Then, they took the child to the hospital into the unit of intensive care. After a thorough clinical examination, the child was found to have a third-degree burn and the extent was more than 50 per cent. Few weeks after he was stabilized, he was sent to the pediatric ophthalmology ward where he was operated.



Fig. 1: Photograph of a 7 years old epileptic child burnt by flame

DISCUSSION

Burns are a major public health problem that requires long hospitalization stay in both intensive care units and general wards [4]. Burns remain a common and potentially devastating cause of injury in childhood [5].

The majority of these injuries occur in the home. Scalds resulting from hot liquids are most common (80%), that occur five times more frequently than those occurring due to flame in the first three years of life [6].

Though the parents knew that the child was likely to fall into the fire, they left him without any caution; their neglectful behavior is reprehensible.

Neglect is a persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or developmental needs. Neglect includes failing to provide for a child's health, education, emotional development, nutrition, clothing, shelter, safety and safe living conditions, and includes exclusion of the child from the home and abandonment [7].

Child abuse is a serious and common problem that is associated with adverse health outcomes, can be effectively detected and prevented [8].

In developing countries, some people have no respect for child rights despite the ratification of several international acts. In the provision of Article 7-1 of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, "The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents" [9].

People with disability have some extra protections through special conventions. Every State-party to these conventions must strive to

protect their rights. In the provision of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [10], "Countries must protect the physical and mental integrity of persons with disabilities, just as for everyone else (Article 17), guarantee freedom from torture and from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and prohibit medical or scientific experiments without the consent of the person concerned (Article 15)".

Disable people have the same rights as normal people; according to the article 1 of the Universal declaration of human rights, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit brotherhood" [11].

CONCLUSION

Neglect and abuse of children, particularly those who are vulnerable, must be considered as a felony. Their perpetrators regardless their relationships with the victims have to be prosecuted.

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