

JOURNAL HIGHLIGHTS

—edited by Thomas Curran

The purpose of Journal Highlights is to alert readers to current literature and research on child maltreatment. Selected articles from journals representing APSAC's multidisciplinary membership are presented in the form of an annotated bibliography. All APSAC members are encouraged to send copies of current articles they believe would benefit Advisor readers, accompanied by a two to three-sentence summary of the article, to: Thomas F. Curran, LCSW, JD, 1405 72nd Av., Philadelphia, PA 19126.

LEGAL ISSUES IN CHILD MALTREATMENT

Berlin, F.S., Malin, H.M. and Dean, S. (1991). Effect of statutes requiring psychiatrists to report suspected sexual abuse of children. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 148 (4), 449-453.

Data collected from 1979 through 1990 at the Johns Hopkins Sexual Disorder Clinic raise questions regarding the efficacy of laws requiring mandatory reporting by psychiatrists of sexual abuse disclosures. Self-referrals by perpetrators dropped from a ten year average of seven per year to zero after reporting of abuse that occurred prior to treatment became mandatory in 1989. Also, in 1988, when laws went into effect that mandated reporting of abuse that occurred during treatment, the rate of patients' disclosures fell from approximately 21 per year to zero. The authors conclude that options other than reporting may enhance the chances that children will be protected. (JH)

Pipe, M.E. and Goodman, G.S. (1991). Elements of secrecy: Implications for children's testimony. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, 9, 33-41.

Several studies dealing with children's secrets are reviewed in this article. The significance of social and motivational factors on children's willingness to report information is discussed in detail. The studies examined provide strong evidence that asking children to conceal information or to keep it secret may have marked effects on their subsequent reports or disclosures, including in-court testimony. (TFC)

PERPETRATORS OF ABUSE

Milner, J.S. and Chilamkurti, C. (1991). Physical child abuse perpetrator characteristics: A review of the literature. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 6 (3), 345-366.

A thorough review of physical abuse perpetrator characteristics is presented. Four categories of perpetrator variables are discussed in detail: social, biological, cognitive-affective, and behavioral factors. Very practical assessment implications are also discussed. (TFC)

Rice, M.E., Quinsey, V.L. and Harris, G.T. (1991). Sexual recidivism among child molesters released from a maximum security psychiatric institution. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 59, 381-386.

This article reports on correlates of recidivism among 136 extrafamilial molesters, 50 of whom received 20-session treatments, primarily with aversion therapy. Recidivism was associated with no marital history, prior convictions/incarcerations, presence of a personality disorder, and deviant pre-treatment phallometric assessment. However, neither aversion therapy nor associated changes in arousal patterns were associated with reduced recidivism rates, suggesting that this treatment approach was not sufficient for this admittedly severe population, and supporting previous findings that phallometric measures of treatment success have limited validity. (MC)

Whipple, E.E. and Webster-Stratton, C. (1991). The role of parental stress in physically abusive families. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 15 (3), 279-291.

This study utilized parent interviews, self-report questionnaires, and home observations to explore differences between 29 physically abusive and 94 nonabusive families seen in a parenting clinic for conduct-problem children. Physically abusive parents, especially mothers, reported more psychosocial stressors and less social support than nonabusive families: lower social position, history of abuse as a child, alcohol or drug abuse, maternal depression and anxiety, marital dissatisfaction, and more subjectively-reported behavior problems among their children, emerged as significant contributory factors to the complex relationship between stress and abuse. (JKC)

PHYSICAL ABUSE, NEGLECT AND EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Haskett, M.E. (1990). Social problem-solving skills of young physically abused children. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development*, 21 (2), 109-118.

This study examines the social problem-solving ability of a group of physically abused children (between the ages of 4 and 6 years) and a matched comparison sample of nonabused children. In response to hypothetical social problems, abused children generated a more restricted range of types of solutions and were more likely to persevere on negative solutions. Implications for direct intervention with young abused children and recommendations for future research are made. (MEH)

Kaufman, J. (1991). Depressive disorders in maltreated children. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 30 (2), 257-265.

This article reports a finding that the rate of depressive disorders in a sample of fifty-six 7-12-year-old maltreated children was much greater than the base rate in the general population, especially for children with histories of out-of-home placements, physical abuse, or emotional maltreatment. The author highlights the importance of the quality of parent-child relationships in predicting which maltreated children will develop depressive disorders, but notes the impact of such environmental stressors may be mediated by cognitive and neurophysiological abnormalities. (JKC)

Nightingale, N.N. and Walker, E.F. (1991). The impact of a social class and parental maltreatment on the cognitive functioning of children. *Journal of Family Violence*, 6 (2), 115-130.

This study compared the cognitive functioning of (50) maltreated children with that of (20) nonmaltreated children. The maltreated children were deficient in cognitive functioning but no more so than children from low SES backgrounds. These findings suggest that it may be deprived family circumstances common in abusing families, and not the abuse per se, that is responsible for the cognitive deficits often found in abused children. (KKT)

Singer, L.T., Song, L.Y., Hill, B.P. and Jaffe, A.C. (1990). Stress and depression in mothers of failure-to-thrive children. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 15, 711-720.

This article reviews a study in which 30 mothers whose children were hospitalized for failure-to-thrive (FTT) were compared to a normative group. Mothers of the FTT children perceived their children as more stressful, less adaptable, more inconsolable, and more unhappy than did mothers of healthy children. (KKT)

Vissing, Y.M., Straus, M.A., Gelles, R.J. and Harrop, J.W. (1991). Verbal aggression by parents and psychosocial problems of children. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 15 (3), 223-238.

Analyses of a representative sample of 3,346 families found that 63% of parents reported one or more instances of verbal aggression, such as swearing at and insulting the child. Children of all ages who experienced frequent verbal aggression from parents exhibited higher rates of physical aggression, delinquency, and interpersonal problems than other children. (KKT)

SEXUAL ABUSE

Friedrich, W.N., Grambsch, P., Broughton, D., Kuiper, J. and Beilke, R.L. (1991). Normative sexual behavior in children. *Pediatrics*, 88 (3), 456-464.

A sample of 880 normal 2- to 12-year-old children whose mothers completed the Child Sexual Behavior Inventory (CSBI) in this study to assess the frequency of a wide range of sexual behaviors and to measure the relationship of these behaviors to age, gender, socioeconomic and family variables. Significant findings for both sexes included a decline in overt sexual behavior with age. In addition, some sexual behaviors were found to be normal, but others were clearly quite unusual for this age group. (TFC)

Hazzard, A., Webb, C., Kleemeier, C., Angert, L. and Pohl, J. (1991). Child sexual abuse prevention: Evaluation and one-year follow-up. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 15 (1/2), 123-138.

Implementing the Feeling Yes, Feeling No prevention curriculum, which incorporates an affective component as well as concrete rules and behavioral rehearsal, was effective among mid-elementary aged children in increasing prevention-related knowledge and the ability to differentiate, in videotape vignettes, between safe and unsafe situations. Gains were maintained at 6-week and 1-year follow-ups, and enhanced slightly by an interim "booster" shot intervention. Negative emotional/behavioral consequences from program participation in a school setting were reportedly minimal. (JKC)

Johnson, B.K. and Kenkel, M.B. (1991). Stress, coping, and adjustment in female adolescent incest victims. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 15 (3), 293-305.

This article assessed the association between coping styles and distress in 45 adolescents in treatment for intrafamilial sexual abuse. Maternal disbelief and lack of support, appraisal of self as unable to control one's environment, and coping by detachment/distancing, wishful thinking, or similar mechanisms were associated with increased distress. These factors appeared more important than abuse characteristics. (MC)

Wurtele, S.K., Currier, L.L., Gillispie, E.I. and Franklin, C.F. (1991). The efficacy of a parent-implemented program for teaching preschoolers personal safety skills. *Behavior Therapy*, 22 (1), 69-83.

This study demonstrated that children as young as 3 1/2 years of age can achieve greater knowledge about sexual abuse and can increase levels of personal safety skills through a one-week in-home Behavioral Skills Training Program taught by their parents. Gains were noted in comparison to a delayed-treatment control group and were maintained at a two-month follow-up. Although no negative side effects of the program were reported, the sample was restricted primarily to upper income, well-educated, two-parent families. (JKC)

PROFESSIONAL ISSUES

Craft, J.L. and Stuart, M.M. (1991). Reporting and founding of child neglect in urban and rural communities. *Child Welfare*, 70, 359-370.

Forty subjects from a rural community and 36 from an urban community were surveyed regarding their inclination to report child neglect as represented in a number of vignettes. There was considerable agreement among residents of both communities as to what should be reported, and overall inclination to report was high, supporting previous findings that there are common minimal standards of child care across communities. (MC)

Conte, J.R., Fogarty, L. and Collins, M.E. (1991). National survey of professional practice in child sexual abuse. *Journal of Family Violence*, 6 (2), 149-166.

This article reviews a survey exploring how 276 professionals spend their professional time, how much they know and what they think about etiology and treatment of sexual abuse. The findings, particularly related to knowledge of sexual abuse, are somewhat distressing. In some areas of practice current knowledge of child sexual abuse apparently has not been widely disseminated. (TFC)

Conte, J.R., Sorenson, E., Fogarty, L. and Dalla Rosa, J. (1991). Evaluating children's reports of sexual abuse: Results from a survey of professionals. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 61 (3), 428-437.

This study of 212 experienced professionals surveyed the assessment and validation procedures they use in child sexual abuse cases. An excellent analysis of the current knowledge supporting such validation procedures and tools is provided. (TFC)

Contributing editors for this issue included Mark Chaffin, PhD, Janice K. Church, PhD and Jim Harper, MSW, all of the University of Arkansas, Arkansas Children's Hospital, Little Rock, AR; Mary E. Haskett, PhD, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC; Kathleen Kendall-Tackett, PhD, Family Research Laboratory, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH, and Thomas F. Curran, LCSW, JD.