

Case Conference

continued from page 22

young woman's strengths, as well as her problems. Ideally, those professionals who assist in the assessment (i.e., public health nurse, substance abuse counselors, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) specialist) will agree to participate in a small "wrap around" team with the mother, so that assessment, case management and service delivery can be "seamless" and efficient.

Serious consideration should be given to organizing some form of family group meeting or conference, to invigorate family connections which are currently not a source of much support for this mother and her children and to encourage extended family participation in a safety plan for the children. It is important to mobilize family connections and support, which will hopefully last long after the CPS case is closed.

The case management team should meet a minimum of every month or two for a minimum of 6-9 months, to assess how the mother and children are progressing. While the mother's drug use/abuse must be a continuing concern, decision making regarding children's placement and/or legal action on their behalf should be focused on the mother's quality of care of her children, not her drug use or abuse in and of itself.

The question, which must be answered by the CPS caseworker or case management team, is "how is the mother's use of dangerous drugs impacting her ability to care for her children?" Prior to removing children from a parent who may have given adequate care to an 18-month-old child for some time, the public agency should have to demonstrate a clear connection between the mother's substance use/abuse and child abuse or neglect.

JOURNAL HIGHLIGHTS

Edited by
Rochelle F.
Hanson

The purpose of Journal Highlights is to inform readers of current research on various aspects of child maltreatment. APSAC members are invited to contribute to Journal Highlights by sending a copy of current articles (preferably published within the past six months), along with a two or three sentence review to Rochelle F. Hanson, Ph.D., National Crime Victims Research & Treatment Center, Medical University of South Carolina, Charleston, SC 29425 (FAX 843 792-2945) e-mail: hansonrf@musc.edu

Sexual and/or Physical Abuse

Child's Report and Medical Exams Most Reliable Indicators of Child Sexual Abuse

This article addresses the issue of which sources of information clinicians should rely upon when conducting child sexual abuse (CSA) assessments. Specifically, the common indicators and procedures used to decide whether a child was sexually abused are identified and then examined in light of their respective empirical literatures. It is concluded that medical examinations and the child's report are among the best sources of information, and should therefore be most heavily relied upon to arrive at accurate decisions. Clinicians are encouraged to adopt the mind set of a scientist conducting an a priori, hypothesis-driven research investigation. This approach should help clinicians avoid the temptation of post hoc analyses that reflect personal biases more than the actual data.

Dammeyer, M.D. (1998). The assessment of child sexual abuse allegations: Using research to guide clinical decision making. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*. Vol 16(1), 21-34.

Study challenges hypothesis on child sexual abuse

In this article, the authors tested the hypotheses that child protective services would spend more time and attention investigating sexual abuse cases as compared to others; that they would substantiate such cases at a higher rate, and, having substantiated a child sexual abuse case, they would be more likely to keep such cases open and supervise them randomly. Contrary to the hypotheses, allegations of sexual abuse were substantiated at a lower rate, not investigated more intensively and not offered more services than were other cases.

Levine, M., Doueck, H.J., Freeman, J.B., Compaan, C. (1998). Rush to judgment? Child protective services and allegations of sexual abuse. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*. Vol 68(1), 101-107.

Study Challenges Basic Beliefs About Longterm Effects of Child Sexual Abuse

Many lay persons and professionals believe that child sexual abuse (CSA) causes intense harm, regardless of gender, pervasively in the general population. The authors examined this belief by reviewing 59 studies based on college samples. Meta-analyses revealed that students with CSA were, on average, slightly less well adjusted than controls. However, this poorer adjustment could not be attributed to CSA because family environment (FE) was consistently confounded with CSA, FE explained considerably more adjustment variance than CSA, and CSA-adjustment relations generally became nonsignificant when studies controlled for FE. Self-reported reactions to and effects from CSA indicated that negative effects were neither pervasive nor typically intense, and that men reacted much less negatively than women. The college data were completely consistent with data from national samples. Basic beliefs about CSA in the general population were not supported.

Rind, B., Tromovitch, P., & Bauserman, R. (1998). A meta-analytic examination of assumed properties of child sexual abuse using college samples. *Psychological Bulletin*. Vol 124(1), 22-53.

continued on next page

New Version of Conflict Tactics Scale for Parents and Children

This article describes the development of a new version of the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) called the Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scale (CTSPC). The scale is intended to measure psychological and physical maltreatment and neglect of children by parents, as well as nonviolent modes of discipline. Description of the conceptual and methodological approaches used and psychometric data for a nationally representative sample of 1,000 U.S. children, ranging in age from infancy to age 17, are presented.

Straus, M.A., Hamby, S.L., Finkelhor, D., Moore, D.W., & Runyan, D. (1998). Identification of child maltreatment with the Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scales: Development and psychometric data for a national sample of American parents. *Child Abuse & Neglect*. Vol 22(4), 249-270.

Study Documents Prevalence of Childhood Maltreatment Among Adult Prison Inmates

This article examined self-reports of childhood victimization (physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect) among a sample of 301 convicted adult male felons randomly selected from a New York State medium-security correctional facility. Overall, 68% of the sample reported some form of childhood victimization, although the percentage varied depending on the measure used to assess the childhood abuse experiences. Violent offenders reported significantly more childhood neglect than nonviolent offenders but not more physical abuse. On an overall index of childhood sexual abuse, sex offenders reported higher rates of childhood sexual abuse than other offenders (26.3% vs 12.5%).

Weeks, R., & Widom, C.S. (1998). Self-reports of early childhood victimization among incarcerated adult male felons. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. Vol 13(3), 346-361.

Other Issues in Child Maltreatment

Reliability of Child Witnesses Examined

In this article, some issues, concerns, and research regarding the interviewing of young child witnesses are reviewed. The article focuses on research on suggestibility and the influence of various interviewing techniques on the reliability and credibility of young children's reports. Implications of this research for future research and for policy are discussed.

Bruck, M., Ceci, S.J., & Hembrooke, H. (1998). Reliability and credibility of young children's reports: From research to policy and practice. *American Psychologist*. Vol 53(2), 136-151.

Study Refutes Class Bias in Child Maltreatment Reports

This article reviews the literature on the degree of class bias in child protective services databases and recent empirical findings on the class distribution of child maltreatment. The evidence suggests high levels of child abuse and neglect among the poor and, despite debate on the question, there is no body of empirical data suggesting that these findings are a product of bias predisposing toward overestimates of child maltreatment among the poor. Implications for research, practice, and policy are offered.

Drake, B. & Zuravin, S. (1998). Bias in child maltreatment reporting: Revisiting the myth of classlessness. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*. Vol 68(2), 295-304.

Repressed vs False Memory: Legal Implications

This article presents an overview of the competing theories about, discusses the existing studies and surveys on, and summarizes the legal issues in the controversy between memory repression vs false memory. In this discussion, some of the recent litigation that has resulted from allegations of past sexual abuse and recent memory recall are examined. Legal implications and possible safeguards are also discussed.

Holdsworth, L. (1998). Is it repressed memory with delayed recall or is it false memory syndrome? The controversy and its potential legal implications. *Law & Psychology Review*. Vol 22, 103-129.

Child Maltreatment Strongly Correlates with Adolescent Gang Involvement

This article examined whether physical and sexual maltreatment raises the risk of gang involvement among secondary school students. Questionnaire results from 2,358 6th-12th graders show that being maltreated increases the probability of gang involvement, independent of demographic factors. When youth are subjected to extreme levels of maltreatment, their odds of participating in gang activities differ only slightly from youth who report occasional maltreatment, suggesting that prevalence measures may be better predictors of gang involvement than incidence measures. When youth are beaten physically and molested sexually, their odds of gang involvement are four times higher than youth who do not experience maltreatment. Finally, being maltreated is a much more robust correlate of gang involvement than the level of support, communication, educational interest, and supervision youth receive from their parents.

Thompson, K.M., & Braaten-Antrim, R. (1998). Youth maltreatment and gang involvement. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. Vol 13(3), 328-345.

The Link between Domestic Violence and Child Abuse

This article discusses the responsibility of battered women in relation to the protection of their children in domestic violence cases. During the last few years, many child protection service (CPS) workers are now being trained on the interrelationship between domestic violence and child abuse. They are becoming aware of how the dynamics of one affects the other. This growing understanding has brought increased interaction between the heretofore estranged child abuse and domestic violence communities. The operations of and differences between the case management of domestic violence for the mothers vs her children are discussed. It is noted that where the domestic violence professionals may respect the mother's rights of self-determination, the CPS professional must not allow the freedom of choice to unduly endanger the child.

Wilson, C. (1998). Are battered women responsible for protection of their children in domestic violence cases? *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. Vol 13(2), 289-293.