



## Pathology & Biology Section – 2005

---

### G101 Child Abuse by Another Child: Can it Happen?

*Darinka Mileusnic-Polchan, MD, PhD\*, University of Tennessee Medical Center, Knox County Medical Examiner's Office, 1924 Alcoa Highway, Knoxville, TN 37920; and Sharon O'Connor, Cook County Office of the Medical Examiner, 2121 West Harrison Street, Chicago, IL 60612*

The goal of this presentation is to recognize and appreciate child abuse by another child as a special entity with far reaching professional, ethical, and social consequences.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by demonstrating how child abuse by another child is an extremely rare occurrence; however, when it happens it should be promptly recognized. To assure proper handling of these distressing cases in an efficient and sensible manner, team work of all involved investigators, pathologists, clinicians, and social workers appears to be of paramount importance.

In this presentation the authors describe a rare and unusual variant of child abuse in which the investigation focused on ruling out a preschool child as the perpetrator. The first part of the presentation outlines the investigative process, highlighting the importance of the alternative approach to examination and specific methods during the inquiry of the suspects. Following that the authors discuss autopsy findings such as the complex nature of the injuries and particularly the peculiar ocular involvement. Correlation between the pathology and proposed mechanism(s) of injury is emphasized.

Secondly, ethical, social, and professional issues concerning all involved parties in this daunting and disturbing case are analyzed. Differing opinions and crucial disagreements among child abuse experts regarding workup and findings in this case are disconcerting. These fundamental differences might reflect to a certain extent doubts and emerging crises that are becoming increasingly apparent in the child abuse field. In the end the authors analyze these issues in terms of outcome and follow-up of this tragic event.

**Blunt Force Injuries, Retinal Hemorrhage, Social Services**