



Pathology & Biology Section – 2005

G104 Ano-Genital Findings in Sexually Abused Children in Cases With a Conviction

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand that anogenital findings at colposcopic examination are not major determinants for conviction at court.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by assisting professionals in understanding that specific physical findings of the ano-genital area are seldom found in sexually abused children; the history told by the child remains paramount in cases of sexual abuse.

The department of Forensic Medicine, Aarhus, Jutland, Denmark, performs, at the request of the police, colposcopic examinations of children suspected to be sexually abused. Included in the research during the period from January 1, 1996 to September 1, 2002, were 482 children, giving an incidence of 1,48/ 10,000 children from birth to 16 years of age in Jutland, Denmark. This study includes those cases in which the perpetrators were convicted at court because of substantial evidence of sexual abuse of the child.

Results: One Hundred sixty-five perpetrators were convicted at court, involving 149 girls and 11 boys, with a median victim age of 13.5 years for boys and 10.6 years for girls (range 0-15 years of age). Forty-one children reported touching of genitals; 22 attempts of vaginal, anal, or oral penetration, 21 vaginal penetration; 5 anal penetration; 10 fellatio; and 33 a combination of the above (the rest were other or unknown). Twelve children were examined within 24 hours after the last sexual assault, 36 within a week and the rest more than a week later.

Colposcopic findings: Sixty-one girls had normal internal genital findings (vagina, hymen, vestibulum, labia minor). Ninety-one had abnormal findings, all non-specific findings except for 10 who had lesions. One hundred thirty-three had normal external genital findings (labia majora, perineum, perianal area). Fifteen girls had abnormal external genitals, of which six were lesions of the labia majora or/and perineum. Two boys had abnormal but non-specific findings of the penis and four of the anus. Abnormal findings of the anus were found in 22 girls; of the abnormal anal findings, seven were lesions. Thirty girls had an incomplete cleft of the hymen, but only eight were complete posterior clefts.

Abnormal ano-genital findings were not significantly correlated to conviction at court; however, the age of the child was.

Conclusion: The history from the child, not physical findings, remains the single most important feature in cases of sexual abuse.

References:

- A.K. Lauritsen, K.Meldgaard, A. Vesterby: "Medical examination of sexually abused children - medicolegal outcome," AAFS 1998. p.96.
- A. Vesterby, R. Hagemann-Petersen, A.K. Laurisen: "Sexually transmitted disease is rare in sexually abused children." IAFS 1999, 15: p. 95.

Child Sexual Abuse, Colposcopic Examination, Conviction at Court