



D15 The Role of Testing for *Chlamydia Trachomatis* When Examining Sexually Abused Children

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the importance of testing for sexually transmitted diseases, in this case *Chlamydia trachomatis*, when examining sexually abused children, even in cases with normal ano-genital findings and no symptoms of sexually transmitted diseases.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by demonstrating the relevance of discussing the methods of documenting sexual abuse. The presence of a positive *Chlamydia trachomatis* culture in a pre-pubertal child is a strong indicator of abuse, and may be an important evidential factor. Researchers wished to evaluate the tests for *Chlamydia trachomatis* and point out the relevance and importance of performing cultures when looking for *Chlamydia trachomatis* infections in pre-pubertal children.

At the Institute of Forensic Medicine, Department of Forensic Pathology and Clinical Forensic Medicine, Aarhus University, Denmark, medicolegal examinations of suspected sexually abused and assaulted children have been performed since 1995. The children are referred to the Institute by the police, and in a few cases by the local pediatric department. The institute serves an area of approximately 2.5 million inhabitants, which is close to half of the Danish population.

The medicolegal examinations are performed by forensic pathologists specially trained in clinical forensic medicine and are undertaken to document signs of sexual abuse. The examination includes a colposcopic examination of the ano-genital area when possible, documented by digital video recording. When indicated by history, tests for sexually transmitted diseases are included in the examination. If treatment is needed, the children are referred to their local pediatric departments or their general practitioner.

All cases with examinations of allegedly sexually abused children at the Institute from January 1st 1995 to July 15th 2006 were evaluated. In total 618 children in the age group 0-14 years had been examined and in 93 % of cases, colposcopy was used as a diagnostic tool. Until 2006, there had been no positive test results of *Chlamydia trachomatis* or *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*. The first positive test result came back in a case of a single incestuous incident of sexual abuse by the step-father of an, at the time of the assault, eight year old girl, that took place approximately two and a half years prior to the time of examination. Vaginal penetration was described by the girl. The colposcopic examination revealed normal ano-genital findings. A culture obtained from the vaginal wall came back positive for *Chlamydia trachomatis*.

The results of these tests so far may indicate a need for a discussion of the indications used for testing for sexually transmitted diseases in children and the methods used in the examinations. It's important to consider why the prevalence in the examined material is so low. Cultured tests for *Chlamydia trachomatis* have so far been the only reliable tests, when the results are meant to serve as possible forensic evidence, because it is highly specific, and positive PCR tests should be verified with a test culture. But it is also a test that adds to the discomfort of the examination, and may be impossible to obtain, therefore reliable alternative test methods would be advantageous to the examination. It is important to do continuing testing for sexually transmitted diseases, even though the incidence in this specific population is low. When the tests come back positive, they may serve as an important evidential factor.

Child Sexual Abuse, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, *Chlamydia Trachomatis*