



I33 A Particular Case of Latticed Allegations in a Nursery School in Brescia, Italy

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After attending this presentation, attendees will learn tools to conduct a proper interview in cases of alleged sexual abuse.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by helping evaluators to better distinguish between correct and incorrect procedures in interviewing children.

Sexual abuse of children is difficult to identify. The phenomenon rarely emerges as objective evidence of the abuse and children are the only witnesses of the alleged facts.

Sexual abuse of children has become the subject of great community concern and the focus of many legislative and professional initiatives. This is evident by the expanding body of literature on sexual abuse, public declarations by adult survivors, and increased media coverage of sexual abuse issues.

There are various reasons why children can make false allegations and a false report may also occur without any responsibility on the part of the child, often due to incorrect interviewing procedures with the child who is the alleged victim of abuse. Moreover, interviewers do not always have enough expertise to avoid errors.

Research has had a tendency to concentrate on the suggestibility of children and neglected other topics that may be of great utility to those who investigate suspected cases of child sexual abuse. More attention should have been paid in the brief to the complexities of assessment. Too much emphasis has been placed on children and not nearly enough attention on remedial actions to minimize the problems associated with suggestion. Finally, research shows that it may be possible to develop reliable and valid techniques to assess child sexual abuse allegations.

The best way for interviewing children is the foundational structure of the interview itself. If the child is approached in the wrong manner with limited efforts to make them feel comfortable during the reconstruction of the incidents, the final product could be useless. It is important to encourage children to tell particulars as well as any detail of the alleged incidents in a spontaneous way.

Cross-contamination between children and/or their families could also, in part, explain the latticed allegation problem.

If most of the alleged victims know one another, then is it possible that children will talk among themselves about their allegation, resulting in contamination.

The purpose of this study was to examine a particular case of latticed allegations involving more than 20 victims between four and five-year-olds in a preschool in Brescia, a city in the northern part of Italy.

In this case, as in all latticed allegations, although some statements stem from real elements, the proliferation of reports is attributed to a range of mutual contaminations made, as this research has highlighted, mainly by bad interview techniques. This research compares the emerging Italian case studies on this phenomenon with the well established cases in the United States.

This presentation will also address how to consolidate the best practice in psychological forensic sciences and how it is important to integrate this practice together with the crime scene activities and lab analyses especially in cases of alleged child abuses.

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