

E60 A New Approach and Suggestions for Child Sexual Abuse Cases

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Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will understand a new approach in child sexual abuse and examination as well as reporting.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by increasing awareness of children's rights, sexual abuse cases, and all dimensions of the forensic aspects.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines child sexual abuse as “the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend and is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared, or else that violate the laws or social taboos of society.”¹ Children are exposed to abuse in many countries. Reports of child sexual abuse cases have risen considerably in recent years.² Child sexual abuse is usually associated with other violence, such as physical violence, threats, frightening, drugging, or “obtaining consent” from individuals who are unable to do so, either because of age or mental disease.

The management of cases of sexual violence is a complex, long, and difficult process from the first encounter to the completion of treatment and rehabilitation of the patient. The process requires a multidisciplinary approach, with emphasis on the health and well-being of the patient. The process of disclosure is very difficult for children.^{2,3} The investigation begins after being notified of an allegation of child sexual abuse. Some investigative practices lead to the identification of other victims or to allegations of False reports. Because of these factors, the forensic investigation must consider the need of the child and the accused person.⁴

During an 18-month period between 2018 and 2019, 156 sexually abused children, all below the age of 15 years, were examined and evaluated at the Cukurova University Forensic Medicine Department. Turkish Medical Clinics categorizes children below the age of 15 years as pediatric patients. Similarly, under Turkish law, children below the age of 15 years are unable to consent to sexual activity. The cases examined included 111 (71.2%) females and 45 (28.8%) males. The children's ages ranged from 4 to 15 years, with the average age of 11.78 years. There were 79 (50.6%) cases of repeated abuse and 77 (49.3%) cases of one-time abuse. There were 45 (28.8%) cases of reported vaginal abuse, 45 (28.8%) cases of anal abuse, and 66 (42.3%) cases of sexual touching. Most of the victims were female, and 69.8% of the time they recognized the male perpetrator. Mental retardation was present in 7% of the victims. Examinations of victims took place in the first 72 hours in 41 (26.3%) cases of abuse. Of those examinations, 39 (25%) had positive physical findings during clinical examination. All examinations were completed both with traditional visual clinical forensic sexual victim examination and by digital multispectral video colposcopy to evaluate and document the case properly for court. The type and frequency of the abuse was obtained from either the victim's history, the health care facility, or some other official entity.

Child sexual abuse usually impacts the victim during childhood, adolescence, and even adulthood. The long-term impact can compromise the life of productivity as a result of the maltreatment of the victims. Sexual assault victims should not be repeatedly traumatized by clinicians and other official authorities. For this reason, a new clinical examination technique and psychiatric evaluation methodology has been implemented. The major point should be the victim's higher benefit, and this should always be protected.^{5,6} A well-trained clinical forensic examiner should always complete proper methodologies at a proper medical facility, and other professionals should always consult with clinicians.^{2,4,7} The rights of children and women should always be accepted as a part of human rights. Society working as a whole should understand the unity of the body of a child or woman.^{2,5}

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