



G44 The Importance of Bitemarks in Child Abuse Cases in Turkey

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Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will have learned about the challenges in collecting and reporting child abuse cases in Turkey.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing some of the injury types in child abuse cases.

Child physical abuse is a major cause of pediatric morbidity and mortality that is associated with physical and mental health problems and can last until adulthood. There are limited numbers of reported child abuse cases in Turkey. Some of the reasons for this lack of reporting child abuse cases include a lack of adequate training of health workers, hesitation to interfere with family issues, the belief that a parent cannot hurt their own children, a lack of official centers for reporting child abuse, and inadequate record keeping and reporting of these types of abuse cases. Turkey is a country that bridges Asia and Europe, acts as a passageway for immigrants, and is also a place for their settlement. Due to the increase of immigrants in recent years, the importance of reporting and the correct handling of child abuse cases has taken more prominent place in the country's justice system.

Child abuse case injuries include facial injuries caused by slapping, patterned injuries, lip lacerations, scaring of the corners of the mouth due to gag use, bruises, human bitemarks, electrical, chemical, or thermal burns, maxillary or mandibular fractures, intraoral injuries, mobilized or broken teeth, torn frenilumlar, other intraoral lacerations, and bruising and injuries to the hard and soft oral palate from forced oral sex.

Case 1: A 3-year-old boy—a forensic report prepared by an emergency room doctor was sent to legal authorities. Upon further examination of the boy, an official report of a child abuse complaint was filed. Examination revealed fracture of the right tibia proximal, bruises on the left lower quadrant of the left breast and right kidney area, a circular pattern of bitemarks on the left gluteal area, scars measuring 2cm x 1cm on the left index finger, swelling of the right arm, and swelling and bruises on the left leg. The report included a list of 25 different injuries. It also concluded that the scars and bruises resulted from repeated blunt trauma and human bites. A forensic bitemark analysis performed by the Istanbul Forensic Medicine's Dental Department was included in the report and used in identifying the defendant.

Case 2: A 2-year-old boy—death resulted from child abuse. According to toxicological analysis, there was no evidence of any chemical or substances that were sought in the analysis. There were numerous nail marks and bruises on the neck, and evidence of continual physical abuse were present on the trunk and victim's back. The cause of death was blunt head trauma that caused cerebral hemorrhage and brain tissue damage. The victim also had rib fracture, internal organ, and abdominal injuries. Upon examination of the bitemarks, the child's father was a match for this closed case.

Bitemarks, Child Abuse, Turkey