Child Welfare in the News: A Survey and Discussion of Child Abuse Cases Around the Country

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DEATH OF MARYLAND BOY
PUSHED IN SWING FOR THREE DAYS RULED A HOMICIDE

Reuters AP
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Reuters AP

* May 2015

* LEO discovered Mother pushing her dead son in a playground swing

* 3 year old child

* Mother pushed the child in the swing for three days

* Child died from dehydration and hypothermia
THE NEW CHILD ABUSE PANIC
THE NEW YORK TIMES
Parents are charged with “medical child abuse”

Doctors reporting parents to abuse agencies for:

- unnecessary treatment
- excessive treatment
- not following doctor’s recommendations
- potentially harmful treatment (includes tests that have harmful side effects, even if the child was not injured)
Case of Justina Pelletier (teenager)

- conflicting medical opinions

- Boston Children’s Hospital (BCH) made abuse allegations of harmful interference with care

- Juvenile court sided with BCH, teen was removed from her Parents’ care

- Justina was returned to her Parents 16 months, still sick later
Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy = when a parent suffers from a mental disturbance, inducing illness in a child to get attention

Medical Child Abuse = unnecessary medical care

- vague
- suggestive
- doctors often disagree
- second opinions
Case of 13 year old suffering from migraine headaches

- missed two years of school from intense pain
- diagnosed with “autonomic nervous system disorder”
- symptoms were managed until... new problems arose
  - dizziness, fatigue, nausea, wheelchair
- doctor did not believe the parents or teen and accused the teen of exaggerating or faking symptoms
- new doctors and new testing revealed a new diagnosis of mitochondrial disease
- new treatment resulted in managed symptoms
THE NEW CHILD ABUSE PANIC
THE NEW YORK TIMES

* Case of the 3 year old tested for a possible genetic disease

* the 5 year old sister died from the genetic disease

* hospital pediatrician accused the parents of medical child abuse (fabricating the son’s medical issues)

* Massachusetts determined the charges were unfounded

* Child was then transferred to another hospital to face another allegation of medical child abuse (over medicalization)

* Parents permitted child to be weaned off meds, child deteriorated, treatments were then restored and the charges were dropped
THE NEW CHILD ABUSE PANIC
THE NEW YORK TIMES

• Similar to...
  • 1980s and 1990s sexual abuse panic
  • 2000s shaken baby syndrome
MOM WENT OUT OF STATE FOR THE WEEKEND, LEFT 8 YEAR OLD SON HOME ALONE

Suffolk, VA
MOM WENT OUT OF STATE FOR THE WEEKEND, LEFT 8 YEAR OLD SON HOME ALONE
Suffolk, VA

- Child was 8 years old
- Mother left Child alone
- Mother left Child with food (pizza and corned beef hash)
- Mother told child to call her every hour, not to tell anyone he was home alone
- Mother told son he could care for himself because he took Tae Kwon Do
- Neighbor noticed son playing outside, called LEO
- Mother arrested with neglect and endangerment
POLICE: 2-YEAR-OLD-GIRL LEFT IN CAR, DAD CHARGED WITH MURDER

Baltimore, Md.
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Baltimore, Md.

- Dad was drinking on Father’s day, left toddler in car for 16 hours
- June, 89 degree heat
- Child discover unconscious with second degree burns on her body
- Father had sole parental custody
- Father left car with child inside, did not remember where the vehicle was
- Family members unaware of location of child
- Car located, father found child unresponsive
POLICE INVESTIGATE FACEBOOK POST OFFERING 4-YEAR-OLD FOR ADOPTION

Dubuque, IA
“Does anyone know a family who would like to adopt a 4-year-old girl? My parents adopted her but got new jobs and they have no time for her. I have 3 kids of my own and can not handle another. Serious inquiries only.”

Posted to private 4,000 member mother’s group in Dubuque (“DBQ MOMMA’s GROUP”).

LEO received several calls, but no criminal act had been committed

No charges

Child welfare check done, child was fine

Child remained with the adopted family

DCF: post was not well thought out, typical of social media
POLICE INVESTIGATE FACEBOOK POST OFFERING 4-YEAR-OLD FOR ADOPTION

Dubuque, IA

Facebook poster replied to criticisms and appeared to back peddle: she was not selling a kid, she was looking at adoption ideas.
FDA APPROVES OXYCONTIN USE FOR CHILDREN AS YOUNG AS 11

Newsweek
FDA APPROVES OXYCONTIN USE FOR CHILDREN AS YOUNG AS 11

August 2015, US Food and Drug Administration approved use of OxyContin for pediatric use

Chronic pain, unsuccessfully treated with other medications, migraine, musculoskeletal conditions, abdominal problems

1 in 6 children with migraine pain prescribed opioids as a first line medication

Time-release option

Opioid addiction is rising in young people

2.1 million Americans struggling with addiction

Precursor to heroin
VERMONT DCF SOCIAL WORKER KILLED BY MOTHER WHO LOST CUSTODY OF HER CHILD
VERMONT DCF SOCIAL WORKER KILLED BY MOTHER WHO LOST CUSTODY OF HER CHILD

- Mother lost custody of 10 year old child
- Mother had criminal convictions
- Domestic assault
- DUI
- Narcotics possession
- Credit card fraud
- Petty larceny
VERMONT DCF SOCIAL WORKER KILLED BY MOTHER WHO LOST CUSTODY OF HER CHILD

- Mother/defendant should not have possessed a gun under Vermont law.
- Authorities unaware of how she came into possession of the firearm
VERMONT DCF SOCIAL WORKER KILLED BY MOTHER WHO LOST CUSTODY OF HER CHILD

- Victim social worker 14 years with DCF
- DCF directed to only go out on emergency calls, accompanied by LEO
- DCF work is dedicated to children and families
- Nature of dependencies is serious
- DCF often enter the worst homes without LEO
WIDESPREAD CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE CASE ROCKS PAKISTAN
WIDESPREAD CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE
CASE ROCKS PAKISTAN
New York Times

* Pakistan officials investigate allegations of rampant sexual abuse on over 200 children
* Accusations have rocked the country
* Pedophilia is a taboo subject in the Pakistani society
* 1.5 million homeless children in the country which makes them particularly vulnerable
* Historically, the government has played down the seriousness of the offenses
* Numerous video clips have surfaced to expose the abuse
* Pakistani politicians are taking up the issue in Parliament
SOURCES


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