



Boletín Médico del Hospital Infantil de México

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REVIEW ARTICLE

Child abuse: knowledge, attention and diffusion in three pediatric hospitals in Mexico[☆]



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Received 8 March 2016; accepted 31 March 2016

Available online 14 November 2017

KEYWORDS

Child abuse;
Knowledge;
Attention;
Diffusion;
Pediatric hospital

Abstract Child abuse (CA) in Mexico has been described since the early 60s through isolated publications of clinical cases where manifestations of physical injury or sexual abuse predominated.

Since the 90s, the Clinic for Integral Care for the Abused Children was established at the National Institute of Pediatrics, which addressed the care, teaching and research on this topic. This approach was replicated in two more hospital centers in the country: the Clinic for Integral Care of the Abused Children at Children's Specialty Care Hospital of Chihuahua and the Pediatric Service of the General Hospital of Mexicali.

The main objective of this work was to present to the medical community, paramedics, and other professionals who interact with the pediatric population and society, the efforts that have been made in Mexico to address this legal, medical, and social pathology in a logical manner, always aiming at the protection of the victims and their families.

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[☆] Please cite this article as: Loredó Abdalá A, Villanueva Clift H, Aguilar Cenicerós AM, Casas Muñoz A. Maltrato infantil: su conocimiento, atención y difusión en tres hospitales pediátricos de México. Bol Med Hosp Infant Mex. 2016;73:219–227.

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PALABRAS CLAVE

Maltrato infantil;
Conocimiento;
Atención;
Difusión;
Hospital pediátrico

Maltrato infantil: su conocimiento, atención y difusión en tres hospitales pediátricos de México

Resumen El maltrato infantil (MI) se ha visualizado en México desde la década de los 60 a través de publicaciones aisladas de casos clínicos donde predominaban las manifestaciones de daño físico o abuso sexual.

A partir de la década de los 90, se estableció la Clínica de Atención Integral al Niño Maltrato en el Instituto Nacional de Pediatría, cuyo accionar se orientó a la asistencia, docencia e investigación del tema. Este enfoque fue imitado en dos centros hospitalarios del país: en la Clínica para la Atención Integral del Menor Maltratado del Hospital Infantil de Especialidades de Chihuahua y en el Servicio de Pediatría del Hospital General de Mexicali.

El objetivo básico de este trabajo fue presentar a la comunidad médica y paramédica, a otros profesionales que interactúan con la población pediátrica y a la sociedad civil los esfuerzos que se han realizado en México para enfrentar esta situación médica-social y legal de una manera lógica, siempre orientada a proteger a las víctimas y a sus familias.

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1. Introduction

Child abuse (CA) in Mexico has been described since the 60s through isolated publications of clinical cases where manifestations of physical injury or sexual abuse predominated.¹⁻⁴

In the early 80s, Dr. Jaime Marcovich Kuba, a Mexican pediatrician at the Children's Hospital of Mexico Federico Gómez (HIMFG, for its Spanish acronym), took the lead by pointing out the severity of the problem. He published the book *I have the right to live*⁵, based on newspaper reports. Two decades before, other physicians, pediatricians, radiologists, and psychiatrists from the HIMFG, and the Pediatric service from the National Medical Center S XXI from the Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS, for its Spanish acronym) made occasional remarks, even if they were only efforts to sensitize the medical community about the issue.⁶⁻⁸

In the decade of 1980, the Department of Internal Medicine of the National Institute of Pediatrics (INP, for its Spanish acronym), a third-level hospital in Mexico City, increasingly detected children with CA who were initially admitted to the hospital for other reasons. At that time, this was called the *battered child syndrome*. The medical group led by Dr. Arturo Loredó Abdalá gained experience on the topic and began publishing articles in Mexican indexed pediatric journals, emphasizing the most remarkable medical and surgical aspects of the children and adolescents who had been physically or sexually assaulted.⁹

Simultaneously, the National System for the Integral Family Development (DIF Nacional, for its Spanish acronym), a government institution, worked with a program called

PREMAN (abuse prevention), addressing the cases where the Mental Health and Legal staff diagnosed an abused child. Given this situation, which prevailed in the second half of the twentieth century, all cases diagnosed in the INP should have been channeled to that institution for their comprehensive care. Years later, the law established the obligation to notify each case to the public prosecutor's office, to clarify the legal status of the child, the family, the potential aggressor, and the momentary or final destination of the victim. The paper published by Dr. Carlos Baeza Herrera and his team about *surgical cases treated at "De la Moctezuma Children's Hospital"* also stood out.

Over time, administrative authorities, medical and paramedical staff working at the INP and other pediatric hospitals, and citizens in general became aware of the medical-social and legal importance of CA. To understand and analyze the problems that arose around this subject, we present the history of the Comprehensive Care Clinic for Abused Children INP (CAINM-INP, for its Spanish acronym) in Mexico City, the Comprehensive Care Clinic for Abused Children at Chihuahua's Children Hospital (HIECH, for its Spanish acronym) in Chihuahua, and the Pediatrics General Hospital, in Mexicali, Baja California. The examples were taken from these three institutions because of their continuous actions around this subject in Mexico on a period of 10 to 20 years.

2. Comprehensive Care Clinic for the Abused Child

In 1997, the Comprehensive Care Clinic for the Abused Child was established in the INP (CAINM-INP) to develop

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