

OP-35: Advances in investigations into alleged child sexual abuse

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Introduction: Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a major health problem worldwide, associated with a wide range of physical, psychological and social adversities. Victims undergo interviewing and examination in the process of management, along with the provision of necessary treatment. Healthcare practitioners need to possess the necessary knowledge and expertise to provide optimal care. This article focuses on advances in medical and police interviewing, roles of emergency physicians, sexual assault nurse examiners (SANE) and social workers in managing CSA in the recent past.

Methods: Pubmed, Researchgate and Google Scholar were searched for keywords for articles in the English language. Twenty-five articles published after 2005 were reviewed, while the current practice was based on articles published by Sri Lankan authors after 2001.

Results: Sri Lanka has limited forensic child care services, therefore interviewing is done by both specialised and non-specialised health care personnel in cases of CSA. The testimony of the child is a crucial determinant of the outcome; hence it is important to incorporate standardised methods into practice which is currently not done in Sri Lanka. The National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Investigative Interview Protocol is one such widely followed protocol which considers a child's age and developmental level and yields a better narrative. Roles of social workers and SANE are beneficial in providing social and emotional support to victims. Emergency physicians can contribute by early detection and emergency medical management of CSA. One-stop centres involving a multidisciplinary team provide comprehensive care in the management by preventing secondary victimisation.

Conclusions: Additional training of both medical and non-medical professionals with regards to interviewing victims of CSA incorporating NICHD protocol and establishing one-stop centres with multidisciplinary involvement including SANE and social workers could be carried out to provide holistic care and improve the victim outcome.

Keywords: advances in child sexual abuse, one-stop centres, medical and police interviewing, sexual assault nurse examiner, secondary victimization