



Featured Pearl of the Quarter!

PROS PEARLS

PROS Child Abuse Reporting Experience Study (CARES)

Clinicians' Description of Factors Influencing Their Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse: Report of the Child Abuse Reporting Experience Study Research Group

- CARES was a prospective observational study to examine primary care clinicians' decision-making processes about whether injured children were victims of physical child abuse. Quantitative analysis revealed that clinicians did not report all suspected physical child abuse to child protective services (CPS). This qualitative evaluation of study data seeks (1) to identify factors clinicians weighed when deciding whether to report injuries they suspected might have been caused by child abuse; (2) to describe clinicians' management strategies for children with injuries from suspected child abuse that were not reported; and (3) to describe how clinicians explained not reporting high-suspicion injuries.
- A sub-sample of participating clinicians was asked to complete telephone interviews about selected injury visits. Interview data (n=75) in this report includes visits in which the clinician reported suspected child abuse to CPS (n=39) or 2) who indicated some level of suspicion that an injury was caused by abuse but who did not report the injury (n=36). Interviews were conducted approximately 6-weeks after the injury visit. Data was analyzed using ethnographic techniques.
- Qualitative analysis of the factors influencing the decision-making process identified four themes: (1) familiarity with the patient or family, including any previous involvement of the family with CPS; (2) reference to elements of the case history; (3) use of available resources; and (4) perceptions of anticipated outcomes of CPS intervention.
- Factors that most influenced clinicians' decisions not to report high suspicion injuries included: (1) familiarity with the family; (2) doubts about the benefits of reporting to CPS; and (3) concern that they would no longer be able to monitor the child if a report were made.
- The decision-making process around the reporting suspicious injuries is very complex. Clinicians weigh a number of factors including clinical findings from the patient, knowledge of and relationship with patient's family, information from professional resources, the clinician's experiences with CPS, and their view of appropriate case management.

These were among the study findings from the AAP's practice-based research network - Pediatric Research in Office Settings (PROS) and National Medical Association's pediatric practice-based research network, NMAPEDSNET. Funding for the Child Abuse Reporting Experience Study (CARES) was received from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (grant R01 HS010746), the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (grant R40 MC 00107), and the American Academy of Pediatrics. Overall, 434 clinicians participated in CARES data collection and collected 15,003 child injury visits.

The following article based on study results appeared in *Pediatrics*:

Jones R, Flaherty E, Slora E, Price LL, Binns H, Abney D, Harris D, Christoffel KK, Sege R. Clinicians' Description of Factors Influencing their Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse: A Report of the Child Abuse Reporting Experience Study Research Group. *Pediatrics*. 2008; 122(2): 259-266.

Manuscript writing continues.