

How Hospital Child Protection Committees Work in Sindh

According to child rights convention, the state should develop a definition of necessary medical assistance and healthcare for the child. The child should be assured of adequate access to health education and health promotion. Hospitals should be made more child friendly.

The National Plan of Action prepared by National Commission for Child Welfare and Development and Working Group against Child Sexual Abuse has five distinct components:

- (1) Prevention,
- (2) Protection,
- (3) Recovery and rehabilitation,
- (4) Participation and monitoring and
- (5) Coordination.

Under the section recovery and rehabilitation, the national plan of action (NPA) includes development of a national core group of master trainers, development of training packages for HCP, training of multi-disciplinary services provider and to establish a child protection committee in each major hospital, support services for victims/survivors of child abuse, development of referral system and publicizing the services available to other hospitals.

In line with NPA, a preemptive action was taken and hospital child protection committee (HCPC) has been constituted initially at two major teaching hospitals in Karachi-Civil Hospital (Oct 5, 2007) and Sindh Government Lyari General Hospital (Sept 5, 2007).

Furthermore, committees have been formed at Liaquat University of Health Sciences Hyderabad (Dec 2007) and Sindh Government Korangi Hospital (March 2008).

The HCPC at Civil Hospital, Karachi, is acting as the central resource and referral centre.

Objectives of HCPC

A Hospital Child Protection Committee has the following objectives:

- To provide optimal management of

abused children by using a multidisciplinary approach and making clinical settings child friendly to pediatric patients;

- To create awareness among hospital personnel about the various forms of child abuse;

- To strengthen the capacity of HCP in the management of victims/ survivors of child abuse by arranging a series of workshops.

- To provide physical and psychological treatment and provide legal support and rehabilitation to the victims/ survivors of child abuse.

- To extend the services to other hospitals of the city and province.

Functions of HCPC

The Hospital Child Protection Committee shall:

- Discuss all matters pertaining to child abuse cases seen in the hospital within the committee and use all resources to solve the problems of the affected children and their families.

- Prepare a plan of action for victims of abuse case including medical and psychosocial management and rehabilitation.

- Provide medico-legal /legal support and reporting, monitoring, advocacy and lobbying.

The structure of the committee varies but the main personnel included are those who come into direct contact with the children during treatment and rehabilitation.

In Civil Hospital, it involves: chairperson, board of governors as chief patron; medical superintendent as patron; coordinator, reporting officer, paediatrician, gynaecologist, psychiatrist, psychologist medical social officer/social worker, surgeon, orthopaedist, medicological officer and legal advisor.

A number of NGOs and IGOs are working partner of HCPC. They include KONPAL child abuse prevention society, PPA, CRC, Save the

Children Fund, Unicef, War Against Rape, SOS village, Panah, Health Care Service and Roshni.

In 2006-2007, a total number of 20 cases of child abuse were brought to HCPC, including sodomy (3), rape (7),

At the moment, the committee's work is being hampered by a lack of legal support. The committee requires social support to plan and run a home visiting programme. It also requires cooperation from other concerned departments; needs protection for care-providers and HCPC members; community participation; wants support by the government; and it faces logistic/financial constraints

incest (5), and of physical abuse (5).

On an average, ten cases of nutritional and medical neglect are brought to the attention of HCPC in each of the Paediatric Unit every month.

From January-March 2008, 11 cases were brought to HCPC, including sodomy (2), rape (1), physical abuse and corporal punishment (7) and severe medical neglect (1), in addition to 13 cases of severe nutritional neglect.

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Parents' Role in Ensuring Child Rights

THIS year, the Annual Health Seminar at the Mama Parsi School was held on Nov 25, 2007. Its theme was 'Child Rights and Role of Parents'. A second seminar, on the theme 'Child Protection and Child Safety: How Parents Can Ensure It' was held at

The guest speaker Dr Aisha Mehnaz eloquently addressed the theme of the seminar by elaborating key issues related to Child Rights and the Role of Parents. She told the audience that according to the Charter for the Rights of Children, a child means every human being below the age

other caretakers is termed as child abuse. This can be intentional or non accidental act of commission or omission by an older person that harms or threatens to harm a child in a significant way, resulting in unnecessary suffering or injury to health. She said that child abuse could take several

forms. Physical abuse and emotional abuse are the more common forms that we come across in day-to-day life. Another form of abuse, that is the sexual abuse often goes undetected. Where discovered, there is a tendency to avoid disclosure or confrontation and few cases are reported. The cases that surface are only the tip of the iceberg.



BVS Boys School on December 16, 2007, with Minister of Education Mr Shujaat Baig in the Chair.

A third seminar was held at the Habib Public Girls School on May 24.

Children have rights as human beings and also need special care and protection. Healthcare Services supports the protection of children's rights and helps them meet their basic needs so that they can expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. This seminar was a continuation of the philosophy of Healthcare Services.

The seminar at the Mama Parsi School began as Dr Ayesha Usman of the Healthcare Services invited the guests on stage. Ms Tampal was representing the Principal. The keynote speaker on the occasion was Professor of Pediatrics at the Dow University of Health Sciences, Karachi, Dr Aisha Mehnaz.

Briefly highlighting Dr Ayesha Usman briefly introduced the theme of the seminar and highlighted the points laid down in the Charter of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. She told the audience that though Pakistan is among the first who had signed the Charter for the Protection of the Rights of Children yet the prevalent situation is still very dismal since very little is done till date to actually implement the Charter in its true spirit.



of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, maturity is attained earlier. She briefly discussed the 54 articles laid down in the Charter. She told the audience that every child is entitled to the highest attainable standard of health, proper nutrition, basic education, loving environment and protection against all sorts of discrimination and exploitation and abuse.

She told the audience that the role of the parents in protecting their children starts from the moment the child is born. Proper vaccination of children, nutritional requirements, emotional requirements are some of the major necessities of children that parents need to take care of.

Dr Mehnaz further elaborated that parents need to protect their children against other forms of exploitation and abuse present in the society, particularly sexual abuse. Children have the right to be cared for and protected from harm and to grow up in a safe environment. She explained that the willful maltreatment or neglect of children by their parents, guardians or

Effects of Child abuse can range from altered behavioral patterns to mild personality changes or long lasting psychological damage. Abused Children can develop eating or sleeping disorders. They can have academic difficulties and are unable to form healthy social relationships.

In the end, Dr Aisha Mehnaz emphasized the role of the parents and teachers in detecting or suspecting a case of Child Abuse and giving protection to children. The lecture was followed by a question/answer session, in which the speaker of the day replied to the queries put forth by parents.

Ms Tampal gave the vote of thanks and informed the audience that the teachers of the Mama Parsi School are playing their role in protecting their students; they not only shared their tribulations but also provide invaluable guidance in solving their problems. Ms Mavalvala's presence was greatly missed. — *The writer, Dr Farah Ahmad, is General Secretary, Healthcare Services*

Activities of Konpal & PPA CRC in 2007-08

The following activities on the issues of child rights and abuse were organized by PPA Child Rights Committee, Sindh, in collaboration with Konpal, Child Abuse Prevention Society during the year 2007.

1. Meetings of the PPA, CRC/Konpal/Hospital Child Protection Committee: Eleven meetings were held at Konpal office and three meetings were held at the office of the Medical Superintendent and the Paeds Unit-III Civil Hospital Karachi.

2. Eight two-day training workshops on Child Protection and Early Case Detection and Management of Child Abuse for Health Care Providers (HCP). More than 300 HCPs were trained in these hands on workshop. These were held at:

- Abbasi Shaheed Hospital, Karachi, May 23-24, 2007; 30 doctors were trained.

- Civil Hospital, Karachi (CHK), Oct 23-24, 2007; 35 doctors were trained.

- Workshop for School Health Doctors at Paeds Unit-III CHK on Oct 23-24 2007; 30 doctors and paramedics were trained.

- Workshop for nurses at the Lyari General Hospital, Karachi, Dec 11-12, 2007; 55 nurses and paramedics were trained.

- Hamdard University, Karachi, Dec 13-14; 35 doctors were trained.

- Civil Hospital/Liaquat University of Medical Health Sciences (LUMHS), Hyderabad, Dec 17-18; 35 doctors were trained.

- Chandka Medical College, Larkana, Feb 2-3, 2007; 47 doctors and paramedics were trained.

- The Aga Khan School of Nursing, Karachi, March 13-14, 2008: 28 doctors and nurses trained.

3. Two one-day Orientation Workshops on Case Detection and Management of Child Abuse: More than 50 doctors and nurses were trained. These were held at:

- Liaquat University of Medical Health Sciences (LUMHS), Hyderabad, March

2; 35 doctors from different specialties were trained.

- Sindh Nurses Examination Board, Nursing Training Institute of Sindh, May 19. More than 35 nurses including 20 senior nurses were trained.

4. Workshops on Development of Literature (IEC material) on Child Abuse for Healthcare Providers, Teachers, Parents and Children on April 20, 2007.

5. Awareness raising seminar on Child Abuse Prevalence, Etiology and Treatment, organized at the Institute of Clinical Psychology (ICP), University of Karachi, July 26, 2007. The seminar was attended by over 60 participants from ICP.

6. Hospital Child Protection Committee: This committee has been very active, meeting every month regularly. Cases managed by CPC and the problem faced by the Committee and the child victims and their family were discussed.

Five cases of incest, four cases of sexual abuse, 5 cases of physical abuse and 61 cases of nutritional neglect were brought to attention of HCPC.

7. Walk Against Child Abuse: In recognition of the World Child Abuse Prevention Day and International Children Day, Konpal, Child Abuse Prevention Society/PPA,CRC has organized a walk against child abuse on Nov 18, 2007, at 9:30 am. It was met with huge success over 1000 people participated in the walk.

8. Programmes on radio and television: Several awareness raising programmes on television channels (Hum TV, TV One) and radio (FM100, FM 107) were presented in which the issue of child abuse was amply highlighted.

9. Children's Day Celebration at the Department of Paediatrics Unit III, Civil Hospital, Karachi, Nov 22, 2007. Literature on self protection was distributed among school children of the City School who visited the ward.

10. Awareness raising seminars were

held on child rights and abuse for parents at:

- Mama Parsi School, Karachi, Nov 25, 2007. The topic was Child Rights and the Role of Parents. Over 300 parents attended and took active part in discussions.

- BVS School on Nov 16, 2007. The topic was Child Protection and Child Safety: How Parents Can Ensure It. More than 300 parents and teachers participated in the seminar.

11. *Konpal Bulletin*: The first issue of *Konpal Bulletin* was taken out this year, featuring the activities of child rights, PPA and Konpal groups.

12. Participation in workshops: Members of the PPA,CRC/Konpal participated in a number of workshops/ seminars organized on the issue of child rights, abuse and child protection. These include.

- Workshop on HIV/AIDS organized by UNICEF, participated by Dr Umbreen Gul and Dr Imran.

- Workshop on Training of Tutors on Child Sexual Abuse organized by UNICEF, participated by Dr Nusrat Shah, Dr Razia, Ms Shahnaz Yasin, Mrs Yasmin Khalid.

- Two-days participatory Annual Work Plan Review of Child and Adolescent Protection Programme (CAPP) Nov 14-15, 2007 at Pearl-Continental Hotel, Karachi organized by UNICEF participated by Dr Aisha Mehnaz, Dr Ashfaq Mala.

- Workshop on Operationalization of NPA organized by Save the Children Fund Sweden at Islamabad, participated by Dr Aisha Mehnaz.

- Workshop on Civil Society Organization (CSO) networking participated by Dr Ashfaq Mala and Dr Aisha Mehnaz.

- Workshop on Alternative to Corporal Punishment in Schools participated by Dr Farah Ahmed and Ms Shahnaz Yasin.

- Workshop on Child Protection Committee: Experience Sharing at Peshawar on April 17. Dr Aisha Mehnaz and Dr Ashfaq Mala participated.



Walk against child abuse

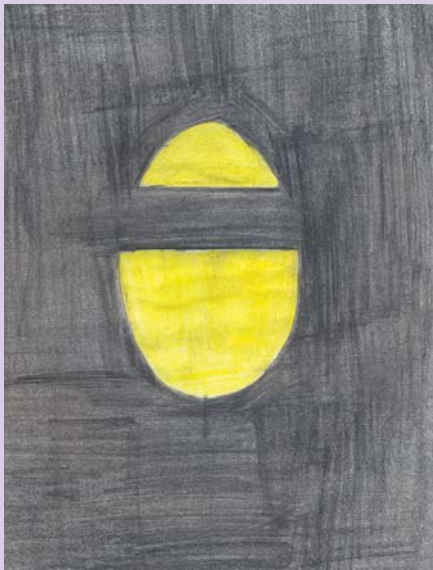


CREATIVE CORNER

Who can bring her dreams back?

Dr Qamrunnisa Hanif

Rani was only twelve years old.
 Very friendly and extremely bold.
 Happily she was singing a song,
 Then came uncle, she walked along.
 He gave her sweets and crack joke,
 Just within an hour Jane was broke.
 She was staring at the sky, so sad,
 All that happened was really bad.
 Whom to tell and where to turn,
 Whom to show bruises and burn.
 How can I narrate it to mother?
 Would have died! Was better rather.
 It came as a news and all forgot,
 No body cares what she begot.
 Her face is wrinkled with circles dark,
 She always loves to sit in dark.
 Got a tattered life, with shattered dreams,
 From absolute silence can hear her screams.
 All she wishes is to put him in ditch,
 Pelt with stones and kill that bitch.
 Just talk of killing and pity will rise,
 But on her plight being quiet is wise.



Expression of gloom: This picture was drawn by a 14 years old girl. The yellow part is the face with a black band that depict hands around the eyes. The theme is that the world is a dark, gloomy place and one is afraid to open the eyes and look around.

Views of Konpal activities



Are you a child abuser?

YOU didn't expect this question. Did you? Before you impulsively say "Why, of course not," please read on. This article is for every parent, because every parent is a potential child abuser.

You may hate to admit it, but even with all natural affection for their children loving parents can be abusive, letting their emotions get out of control more often than they can remember.

Child abuse conjures up in our minds bizarre pictures of thrashing children mercilessly. This type of child abuse is a hideous crime and most parents couldn't imagine ever treating a child in such a way. But there are milder forms of child abuse that we may all be guilty of. The startling fact is that child abuse has probably occurred in your own home, with you as the abuser and your child as the victim.

Child abuse is any treatment that destroys the child's sense of personhood, his feelings of self-worth. It is the physical or verbal mistreatment of the child. Abusive behaviour doesn't have to leave visible scars. It can leave internal scars—the kind that over time leave their mark on the child's thinking and personality.

You can protect your child from this type of abuse if you follow these important guidelines.

1. Never discipline in anger. When emotions reach a boiling point, the discipline of your child should wait. Make a phone call, take a walk or listen a while to your favourite music before interacting with your child. When you have brought your emotions under control, it will be easier to think of ways to solve the problem—ways so that it will not lead to further conflict.

2. Your hasty, uncontrolled words or an impulsive slap require immediate apology. Children seldom hold grudges if they know their mother or father is truly sorry. Find the cause that made you to fly off the handle and think how it won't happen again.

3. Treat your child not as he or she deserves to be treated, but as you would

like to be treated if you were in his place.

4. Put your emphasis on preventing behaviour problems rather than merely reacting to them. Solve problems when they are still small and fairly easy to solve, rather than waiting until you and your child get out of control.

5. You can change even if your behaviour in the past has been abusive. You may feel helpless in the face of your own uncontrollable rage.

Remember: few mothers and fathers have lived through the difficult years of child rearing without occasionally losing control, and people who have family ten-

abused when they were young. But you also need to look at your life. Is there too much pressure on you? Can you rearrange things (commitments, responsibilities) in your life to take off some of the pressure? Are you temporarily in a very demanding situation that will end soon? Can you keep in mind that the situation is temporary and then try to take things easier and relax more? Are you upset about something deep down in your heart and haven't recognized it yet? Ask yourself if there are emotional issues you need to deal with so that you'll have more patience with your children.

Also, take a look at your children. Some children, such as strong-willed, hyperactive, or handicapped kids, are more difficult to raise than others. The more difficult the child, the more encouragement and support you may need from others to help you maintain a positive attitude and demeanor. Otherwise, frustration and anger may become overwhelming. Don't be afraid to reach out for help. You need time off from your children so you can come back refreshed. The more difficult the child, the more you need time off.

Finally, if you have physically injured your child, you need to find help and support. Abusive behaviour is usually committed in private, while in public your behaviour is exemplary. That's why your closest friends, if you try to talk about your anger problem, might not believe you and may unintentionally make the problem worse for you by denying it. Find someone who will listen to you and understand.

You can begin today to treat your children with love and respect. You don't have to be a child abuser!

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?



dencies toward quick anger must deal with this issue almost daily. In recognizing that most parents have trouble with anger, you are not excusing yourself. But you are allowing yourself to be human. Guilt won't help an angry person. It adds to the pressures that tend to make human pressure cookers blow up. So don't lay a guilt trip on yourself. Just as children are resilient and forgiving, so must you forgive yourself.

If anger and losing control are frequent issues for you, then you need to ask why. For some, it is because of a bad family background. Research has shown that those who are most likely to abuse their children are people who were themselves

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KONPAL*

**CHILD ABUSE
PREVENTION
SOCIETY**

KONPAL Child Abuse Prevention Society is an NGO working against all form of child abuse. It comprises child rights activists who share the common vision of a society free of child abuse, with zero tolerance against child sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation, involvement of children in hazardous occupation, armed conflicts and violence. The members are professionals from different fields who are concerned with therising incidence of abuse against children. The group is fighting for the rights of children and against all forms of abuse, neglect, maltreatment and exploitation of children.

Walk to create awareness about child abuse and child protection

KONPAL Child Abuse Prevention Society, a group of professionals concerned with the rising incidence of abuse against children, and fighting for the rights of children and against all forms of abuse, arranged for a walk to create awareness about the rampant child abuse, especially in Pakistan.

The walk was held in recognition of

the World Day for Prevention of Child Abuse and International Children Day on Nov 18 around the mausoleum of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

More than a thousand sympathizers with the cause, including a large number of children from Karachi as well as interior of Sindh province came over to lend their support. Professor of Paediatrics at Dow University of

Medical Sciences Dr Aisha Mehnaz, who is also Chairperson Konpal, and other eminent professional led the walk. A number of NGOs and professional bodies also participated in the walk which was widely covered in the press and electronic media.



Dr Aisha Mehnaz speaks to the media



Doctors, teachers, school children and other members of the civil society join the Konpal walk.

—More pictures on pages 4-5

*Konpal' means a new bud. Small, tender, delicate, yet capable of becoming a flower, a leaf or a branch.

KONPAL CALLING