

Children Abuse: Factors Affecting Case Reporting by Physicians

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Objective: To identify the factors inhibiting first contact physicians (primary care physicians, pediatricians and emergency physicians) from reporting child abuse to Child Protection Committee in 2008.

Design: Cross sectional descriptive study.

Setting: Salmaniya Medical Complex and health centers.

Method: The study was conducted during the months of June and July 2008. A proportionate stratified sample of 190 physicians was drawn from first contact physicians (primary care physicians, pediatricians and emergency doctors) working in the public sector. Data of physicians' personal and professional characteristics, awareness of parental behaviors, risk factors and clinical features of child abuse, inhibiting factors for reporting and preferred course of action were collected by a pre-structured self administered questionnaire.

Result: Only 140 physicians completed the questionnaires. All physicians revealed an acceptable level of awareness of clinical presentation and risk factors of child abuse. Primary care physicians scored 1.20 ± 0.48 compared to emergency doctors who scored 0.93 ± 0.49 . Females scored 1.25 ± 0.38 , while males scored 1.01 ± 0.56 . Board certified physicians scored 1.19 ± 0.47 , which is higher than others.

Physicians' apprehension, avoidance of a conflict with the family and lack of knowledge about reporting were found to be the most important factors for inhibiting reporting.

Conclusion: Physicians' apprehension of reporting children abuse, mainly to avoid conflict with the family and lack of knowledge of reporting mechanisms were found to be the most important factors.

It is recommended to support the physicians in decision-making in the practice setting and to attend communication skill workshop, dealing with family conflicts, educational initiatives and child abuse reporting.

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