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Abstract of the Scientific Literature

Association Between Disability and Child Abuse and Neglect

This is the first whole-population-based study to report on the relationship of disability to reports of child abuse. The study concluded that children with disabling conditions seem to be at increased risk of child abuse and neglect. There was a strong association between reports of child abuse and neglect and conditions such as conduct disorder and learning difficulties. This outcome was anticipated, since these conditions share a common etiologic pathway with child abuse and neglect. The study does not necessarily support the view that disability predisposes one to child abuse. Rather, reverse causation and common etiologic pathways with abuse were noted as probable factors.

Comments: There was a strong association between learning disability and conduct disorder with all types of child abuse, but sexual abuse in particular. Children with cerebral palsy were associated with increased reports of physical abuse and neglect. Children with nonconduct psychological disorders and those with speech and language disorders appear to be at increased risk of reports of physical, emotional, and neglect categories, but not in the sexual abuse category. There was no evidence noted of a reduced threshold for reporting of parents/guardians of disabled children for child abuse and neglect. Although dental practitioners assess all patients for potential signs of child abuse and neglect, it appears that children with specific disabilities may be at greater risk of specific types of child abuse and neglect. **GEM**

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19 references

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