

APSAAC ADVISOR

AMERICAN PROFESSIONAL SOCIETY ON THE ABUSE OF CHILDREN



IN THIS ISSUE:

PERSPECTIVES:

Charging Battered Mothers With Failure to Protect is Often Wrong

by Jeffrey L. Edleson, PhD

Battered women who stay with or return to an abusive partner may face charges of failing to protect their children once child protective services becomes involved in their cases. CPS workers may see the mother as placing her relationship with the abuser over the safety of her children. Dr. Jeffrey Edleson, professor of Social Work at the University of Minnesota, offers a different perspective, contending that CPS's assumptions about the mother's level of caring for her children are often wrong, and that the decision to charge a mother with failure to protect is often misguided.

2

FEATURE ARTICLES:

Evaluating the Cultural Sensitivity of Child Abuse Research: Sampling Issues

by Lisa Fontes, PhD

Even with the heightened awareness of the importance of culturally sensitive research, studies without adequate analysis of the effects of culture on the sample are still being reported. Lisa Fontes, PhD examines monocultural, cross-cultural and intra-cultural research studies and shows how the cultural composition and labeling of the sample is key to interpreting the study's results.

8

Expert testimony on children's suggestibility: Should it be admitted?

by Brian Holmgren, JD

The credibility of a child's testimony and the integrity of the interview process is often at the heart of a child abuse criminal trial. In their 1995 book, Stephen Ceci and Maggie Bruck argue that expert testimony is needed to inform judges and jurors of the factors that may influence a child to make a false allegation. In this article, Brian Holmgren, a senior attorney with the National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse, argues that research on the suggestibility of children is sufficiently divided and incomplete to make expert testimony either unhelpful or irrelevant to most child abuse trials.

10

400 Years of the Shaken Infant: From Henry II to John Caffey

by Stephen Lazoritz, MD

Shaken Infant Syndrome may seem to be a modern medical and sociological phenomenon, but history books show the condition has been around for centuries. Initially thought to be caused by an infectious condition, the subdural hematomas commonly seen in cases of Shaken Infant were linked to traumatic origins in the time of Henry II of France. Dr. Stephen Lazoritz traces the history of Shaken Baby Syndrome, from the first recorded case of subdural hematoma to the current research on this injury.

15

REGULAR FEATURES:

Letters to the Editor.....	3
Association News.....	4
News from the Field.....	7
Policy Watch.....	17
Books in Brief.....	19
Journal Highlights.....	20
Conferences.....	23

Farewell, and Thank you!

by Theresa Reid

When I first met APSAC, it was a half dozen boxes cluttering the floor of my office at the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago. Today, APSAC has thousands of members all over the world, 40 state chapters, a highly-regarded newsjournal, an impressive new peer-reviewed journal, a Code of Ethics, a lengthening list of *Guidelines for Practice*, a comprehensive *Handbook* of professional practice in the field of child maltreatment, a growing series of *Study Guides* on specific areas of practice, a major national conference and other annual training events, a Legislative List Serv, two *amicus* briefs submitted to the U.S. Supreme Court, and fact sheets, position statements, audiotapes, and other resources designed to improve practice among the many professional groups that prevent and respond to child maltreatment.

In a field that is still only nominally professionalized, APSAC has a reputation as the reliable source of accessible information that is rigorously data-based, true to the facts as we know them rather than to a cherished advocacy position.

The story of how APSAC grew from a dream to a nationally recognized force in the field of child maltreatment is a story of friendship and hard work, the willingness of scores of professionals from many different disciplines to devote precious personal hours to fulfilling an exciting shared vision.

It has been the greatest privilege of my life to work with the people who have built APSAC. When I first met a group of APSAC's founders in a nondescript meeting room at the O'Hare Marriott one hot July day many years ago, I was almost shocked. I had never before met a group of people with such intelligence and shared commitment — and humor, and warmth. When I left that meeting, my own commitment to being a professor of English had just begun to give way to a strong inclination to join these remarkable people in building the organization they had envisioned.

In my nine years with APSAC, this first impression of its founders and leaders has strengthened and deepened. Familiarity has bred deep admiration and trust. I have been greatly enriched by the people I have met through APSAC — Board members, state chapter leaders, members at large. I profoundly admire the stamina and commitment with which they daily face the most painful of human spectacles, and the spirit that helps them retain their love, hope, and kindness.

As I leave the helm of APSAC to devote myself more fully to the task of raising children (and finally finishing that PhD in English), I look toward APSAC's future with some natural anxiety, but mostly with hope and faith. I trust that the core values of its founders will remain intact and visible through its ongoing work. I can pare my many hopes for APSAC's future to three major wishes.

1. APSAC must grow. Our goal of achieving 10,000 members by the year 2000 is neither a pipe dream nor a delusion of grandiosity. It is essential to achieving APSAC's mission of ensuring that everyone affected by child maltreatment receives the best possible professional response. Membership growth reflects a growing sense of professionalism among those who work in this field, and enables APSAC to strengthen that professionalism further through its products and services. Over 5,000 members is excellent, but it is nowhere near enough to achieve APSAC's mission.
2. My second hope for APSAC is that it stimulates stricter and more frequent peer review and self-criticism among professionals who prevent and respond to child maltreatment. A number of Board members, chapter leaders, and others have spoken with me about their distress at some of the practice that passes for "professional" in this field. Stories of young children suspected of having perpetrated abuse being taken out of school in handcuffs, of women with emotional distress being led into highly suspect memories of childhood abuse, of children being returned to the custody of pathologically brutal parents: although they may not be the norm, these stories outrage professionals as well as the laypeople who watch them on television. Professionals in this field have a moral responsibility to self-police effectively. APSAC's Code of Ethics is a good tool, a step in the right direction. Poor practice by some professionals in the field reflects badly on everyone in the field and ultimately makes child protection much more difficult. We must dedicate ourselves to rooting it out.
3. Finally, I hope that APSAC becomes a major provider of highly rigorous professional education. I hope APSAC's professional education offerings expand tenfold, even more. Having identified the need for dramatically improved professional practice and begun setting standards, APSAC should become known as the leading source of the demanding, principled education that is required to thoroughly professionalize this field. APSAC's role may or may not involve credentialing or accreditation, but it should be systematic, multifaceted, and pervasive.

Rage and grief drive many of those working in this field. The pain of witnessing child maltreatment is so profound that resisting a crusading or self-righteous stance is sometimes extremely difficult. But passionate caring is not enough. We need to be passionately professional, completely committed to serving all clients superbly through practice that is informed by the latest knowledge and research.

The hundreds of remarkable people whom I have met in the last decade point to others as yet unknown. I know that these wonderful people will keep APSAC on the right track, and at the end of the next ten years those who have made the commitment to APSAC will be as astonished at its growth and success as we are at the end of our first decade. I look forward to applauding and helping as I may along the way.

Editor-in-Chief

Debra Whitcomb, MA
Education Development Center
Newton, MA
617-969-7100

Executive Editor

Theresa Reid, MA
Executive Director, APSAC
Chicago, IL
312-554-0166

Managing Editor

Maureen Kelly
Publications Manager, APSAC
Chicago, IL
312-554-0166

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Child Protective Services

Diane DePanfilis, PhD, MSW
University of Maryland
School of Social Work
Baltimore, MD
410-706-3609

Cultural Issues

Veronica Abney, MSW
UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute
Los Angeles, CA
310-576-1878

Investigation

Lt. Bill Walsh
Dallas Police Department
Dallas, TX
214-670-5936

Journal Highlights

Rochelle Hanson, PhD
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL
352-392-1161

Law

Thomas Lyon, JD, PhD
University of Southern California
Law Center
Los Angeles, CA
213-740-0142

Medicine

Lawrence Ricci, MD
The Spurwink Clinic
Portland, ME
207-879-6160

Mental Health/Adult Survivors

Christine Courtois, PhD
Washington, DC
202-955-5652

Mental Health/Children

David Kolko, PhD
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center
WPIC
Pittsburgh, PA
412-624-2096

Mental Health/Perpetrators

Judith Becker, PhD
University of Arizona
Department of Psychology
Tucson, AZ
602-621-3031

Nursing

Beatrice Yorker, RN, JD
Georgia State University
School of Nursing
Atlanta, GA
404-651-2575

Policy Watch

Thomas Birch, JD
National Child Abuse Coalition
Washington, DC
202-347-3666

Prevention

Karen McCurdy, MA
National Committee to
Prevent Child Abuse
Chicago, IL
312-663-3520

Research

David Finkelhor, PhD
UNH Family Research Laboratory
Durham, NH
603-862-2761

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THANK YOU!

These APSAC members have generously made financial contributions in the last several weeks to support vital work of the organization. Their donations have strengthened APSAC's efforts to educate legislators, policymakers, reporters, and editors; to produce additional guidelines for practice; and to encourage promising student research in the field of child maltreatment. We greatly appreciate their generosity and commitment.

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The Katie Toth Memorial Education Fund

The Katie Toth Memorial Education Fund was established in April, 1997, in memory of Mary Katherine Toth Komie, daughter of Patricia Toth, JD, one of APSAC's earliest Board members and APSAC's fifth President. Katie died on April 21, 1997, at 20 months of age.

Patti Toth is one of the volunteers whose great generosity with her time, energy, and expertise has made APSAC so successful. Patti has devoted most of her effort on APSAC's behalf to improving APSAC's professional education and training program. Patti served as chair of APSAC's First National Colloquium, has served as faculty for several different Institutes and Colloquium seminars, and continues to serve on APSAC committees designing new professional education programs.

Given Patti's commitment to professional education, a fund that honors her daughter by contributing to new professional education activities at APSAC seems most fitting. The Katie Toth Memorial Education Fund will help ensure that Katie's memory not only endures, but has the beneficial ripple effect of helping more maltreated children get better professional care.

Gifts to the Katie Toth Memorial Education Fund will be used to provide "seed money" for new professional education initiatives at APSAC — such as one-day regional institutes, the forensic interviewing clinic, and other ideas endorsed by APSAC's Professional Education Committee and Executive Committee. Neither direct donations nor interest on the fund will be used for general operating expenses; thorough records will be maintained on all donations and expenditures.

Contributions should be made payable to "APSAC / The Katie Toth Memorial Education Fund." Donations are tax-deductible, and will be acknowledged with a note from the organization as well as in the *APSAC Advisor*. Patti and her family will be advised of donations on a regular basis.

Many thanks to these colleagues who have already made contributions to the fund.

Richard Krugman, MD
Barbara Bonner, PhD

Terry Hendrix, MA
William M. Friedrich, PhD

Harry Elias, JD
Anita Boles



American Professional Society
on the Abuse of Children
407 South Dearborn Street, Suite 1300
Chicago IL 60605
P 312-554-0166, F 312-554-0919
E-mail: APSACMems@aol.com
<http://www.apsac.org>

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
CHICAGO, IL
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