CHILD ABUSE IN GHANA- An Emerging threat? The Korle Bu experience

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18th April, 2015
Atlanta, USA
Lecture outline

- History of child protection
- Aspects of the different forms of abuse
- Statistics in Ghana/available
- Do we have a mandate as paediatricians?-obligations under international law
- Advocacy and parenting
- The need for training of doctors in child protection work
- National frame work-principles
- Grizzly pictures
HISTORY

- Historically discussed by scholars-Aristotle and Freud
- Child prostitution/use of children for sex-documented at various points in written history
- Tardieu in Paris(1878) documented post mortem findings of sexual abuse in children
- 1961-seminal work by Henry Kempe-”battered child syndrome”
HISTORY

- In the UK - Sir Roy Meadow, Profs Southhall and Chris Hobbs (Fabricated and Induced illness)
- In Ghana - March 2008 - beginning of workshops towards the implementation of a comprehensive National Child Protection system.
Why 2008 and not earlier?

- We as health care professionals looking after children have behaved like this nursery rhyme

- A wise old owl lived in an oak
  The more he saw the less he spoke
  The less he spoke the more he heard
  Why can't we all be like the wise old bird
My worst nightmare  2006
Obligatory stages (Kempe 1978)

- Denial (emotional blocking/reluctance to accept the reality of abuse)
- Recognition of abuse as a problem (NAI)
- Recognition of emotional abuse and neglect
- Recognition of the existence of sex abuse
- Recognition of the need for a preventive approach for all children (after Soldier bar experience, Ghana Govt officially recognised child prostitution existed. Cooperated with UNICEF to set up framework)
FORMS OF VIOLENCE/ABUSE IN GHANA

- Starving
- Punitive rationing of food
- Insertion of pepper into genitals
- Cutting off finger for stealing
- Burning
- Standing or kneeling in the sun for hours
- Forced labour without pay and little time off (In Ghana 71% are found in the agricultural sector including fishing and forestry. Services 2.6% and manufacturing (5.8%))
Biggest employer of child labour in Ghana is the cocoa industry.

Two surveys on labour practices on cocoa farms from 2006 - 2007 and 2007 - 2008 found that 186000 children in cocoa growing areas of Ghana were engaged in at least one hazardous cocoa specific activity.
Traditional practices

- Female genital mutilation (UNICEF estimates that in sub-saharan Africa-3million girls and women subjected to FGM every year!)
- Practiced by some ethnic groups mainly in the Northern, Upper East and Upper west regions
- Outlawed by 1992 constitution
- Legislation calls for sentences of three years if found committing practice.
- Number of FGM practitioners have been jailed UE/UW
Traditional practices

- Trokosi- an estimated 278 women remain subjects
  - 53% in Ketu district
  - 20.5% North Tongu district
  - Others are Akatsi, Dangme West and East
What is trokosi?

- Traditional practice - young virgin girls confined to fetish shrines.
- Reparation to deities for wrongs purported to have been caused by a member of victims family
- Sexual abuse, physical abuse, forced labour occurs at such shrines.
- Several efforts made by Govt and NGOs to eradicate obnoxious practice. No known cases of prosecution exists despite legislation!(Criminal Code Amendment Act of 1998)
Statistics in Ghana

- Study by Gender centre (U of Ghana) found one third of all Ghanaian women suffer physical violence.
- Includes beating, slapping
- Breaking the silence and challenging the Myth of violence against women and children. Edited by Dorcas Coker Appiah and Cathy Cusack
DOVVSU

- Domestic and Victim support unit (formerly WAJU) with branches in 10 administrative regions.
- Part of government’s fulfilment of international obligations towards reduction of domestic violence.
Objectives of DOVVSU

- To protect the rights of victims of abuse
- To investigate all domestic violence (DV) cases
- To investigate all child abuse cases
- To arrest and prosecute offenders or perpetrators of abuse
- Extend support to victims of domestic violence
- Perform other functions as directed by the IGP
DOVVSU STATISTICS (1999 – 2007) - DEFILEMENT

- 1999: 154
- 2000: 181
- 2001: 228
- 2002: 820
- 2003: 755
- 2004: 734
- 2005: 713
- 2006: 1,427
- 2007: 1,578
DOVVSU STATISTICS (1999 – 2007) - INCEST
DOVVSU STATISTICS (1999 – 2007) – NON MAINTENANCE
DOVVSU RECORDS 17,315 - 2007

- Gt. Accra - 5,193 (*Tops the list*)
- Ashanti - 2,844
- Central - 1,866
- Tema - 1,833

- Three northern regions lowest
  - Upper West - 184
  - Upper East - 240
  - Tamale - 285
DOVVSU RECORDS 1,578 FOR DEFILEMENT IN 2007

- Rape
- Defilement
- Child trafficking
- Non maintenance
- Bigamy
- Murder, assault, threatening, stealing and kidnapping
DOVVSU - 2007

- 1,091 cases sent to court
- Only 93 convicted
- 54 acquitted
- 13,679 still under investigation
- 944 awaiting trial
- 2,015 cases closed or settled out of court
- Most defilement cases come from CHORKOR, MAMPROBI, and DANSOMAN
- Currently la Hospital, Lekmar hot spots
Medical student research 2011

![Bar chart showing the results of a medical student research 2011 study. The chart indicates the number of correct answers (blue bars), wrong answers (red bars), and those who don't know (yellow bars) for different categories: CHORKOR, MAMPROBI, DANSOMAN, and TOTAL.]
DOVSSU 2010 – winding the clock

- 6685 cases of abuse reported.
- 85% of victims female
- 982 cases of defilement, (982 in 2009)
- Abduction (238)
- Forced marriage (21)
- Incest (21)
2014

- 17,655 cases
- Non maintenance – 6,158

Significant number and makes the point that Ghanaian society must recognize neglect as abuse.
CHILDREN’S HOMES IN GHANA

- DSW operates 3 state run homes. shelter provided for orphaned or abandoned children
- 2 private homes
- 39 other private orphanages in country. Offer protection and care.
- Abandonment, destitution and unstable families account for admissions
- SHELTER FOR ABUSED CHILDREN-new initiative by DSW. funding from French Embassy. renovated Boys probation wing in Osu Remand Home. Oct, 2003
Children’s homes in Ghana

- Osu
  Kumasi
- Jirapa
- Tamale
- Mampong babies’ home
- UNICEF figures for 2014 – 5000 children live in orphanages in Ghana
- Sadly Min of Gender in 2014 noticed a lot of orphanages using them as transit points for child trafficking and places of abuse
NAI

- NAI is not a final diagnosis
- Symptom of disordered family
- Degree of danger to the child not necessary proportional to severity of initial injury
- Rather proportional to severity of underlying family disorder (should be assessed separately)
Emotional abuse-long term effects

- Educational underachievement
- Stunting of linear growth
- Neurosis
- Personality disorder
- Psychopathy – one case of ritual abuse led to that
- Sociopathy- marital difficulties, alcohol, drug abuse, criminality. Study of tro tro aplankes- abused as kids
- Abuse in next generation
Do we have laws/mandate to fight abuse?

- Chinua Achebe comes to mind
- One of the greatest African writers-in *Anthills of the savannah*, he notes
  - “I say there is too much fighting in Kangan, too much killings
  But fighting will not start unless there is thrusting of fingers into eyes
  Anybody who wants to outlaw fights must first outlaw the provocation of fingers thrust into eyes”
CHILDRENS ACT of Ghana 1998

- 560 ACT of parliament.
- Serves as an umbrella law to all laws and enactments on children in Ghana
- Article 17 – any person who has information on child abuse or a child in need of care and protection should report it to the dept of social welfare. This is mandatory
- Article 16- mandates the DSW to investigate cases of contravention of children’s rights
Do children have rights?

- Ghana was the first signatory to the UN convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Forms the bedrock of paediatric advocacy.
- Examples are right to express an opinion, right to a name and nationality, right to survival and development, right to protection from engaging in work that threatens them etc.
### STREET CHILDREN PER REGION - 2004

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<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>FR</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<td>CR</td>
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<td>AR</td>
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FR - FOREIGNERS
CR - CENTRAL
AR - ASHANTI
GR - GREATER ACCRA
BAR - BRONG AHAFO
UER - UPPER EAST
UWR - UPPER WEST
ER - EASTERN
VR - VOLTA
WR - WESTERN
NR - NORTHERN
STREET CHILDREN IN GHANA

- Street children Project of Ministry of Manpower and Youth Employment
- Equipped 1,655 street children with livelihood skills
- Re-integrated 1,272 street in mainstream society
- Placed 300 street children in formal education and 175 in non-formal education
- Currently 50,000 street children in Ghana. 2010
- Nearly half in Accra and 25% in Kumasi.
- In Kumasi 60% female. 71% of street children illiterate. Many exposed to commercial sex
Martin Luther King

- True peace in this country is not the absence of some negative force eg. political tension, confusion or war
- It is the presence of some positive force-justice, goodwill and brotherhood.
- I see here the positive force coming from civil society and the paediatric faculty where we bring in advocacy to heal these children
Advocacy

- Advocacy is arguing or speaking out on behalf of a particular issue, idea or person.

- Common statements by paediatricians against advocacy-
  - Isn’t advocacy someone else’s job?
  - I do not know how to advocate?
  - I don’t understand how systems work outside of paediatrics
  - I’ll get into trouble. It’s too political
  - I don’t have time. Clinical works comes first.
Advocacy

- Competency very much required in child protection work.
- Need to understand the effects of family composition, socio-economic factors and poverty on child health.
- Be aware of the effect on non-health policies on child health
Advocacy

- Understand how the different disciplines and agencies collaborate locally with respect to children over Child Protection issues.
- Be aware of the effect of the media on public perception of health care issues.
- Advocacy extends into issues like safe play areas, toilet facilities in schools, accident prevention, etc.
Parenting debate

- Paediatricians know the characteristics of a “good parent” and a “bad Parent”.
- Can the faculty not take the lead in launching a parenting debate?
- A lot of the ill health we see clearly comes from bad parenting and very little information on child health at the grassroots level.
Paediatricians need training

- Stakes in child protection are high.
- Effective work in CP requires clinical competencies in history taking, clinical examination, documentation, communication skills and decision making ability.
- Confidence and courage are required to confront abusing carers.
Paediatricians need training

- Clinicians need to cope with their own emotional responses provoked by disturbing cases
- Grey areas in CP work and some doctors uncomfortable with uncertainty.
- Some doctors don’t like to involve outside agencies with the belief that it’s not in the best interest of the child
Paediatricians need training

- Training must be offered to all doctors who have contact with children in Ghana. GPs, A and E staff, orthopaedic surgeons, obs/gyn, GU
- Child abuse must be added to the public health nursing curriculum.
- The dept. of child health now offers a tutorial/lecture to medical students. All post graduate exams must include topic.
- A dedicated unit set up now in the dept of child Health
Call to the young generation of paediatricians

- We need a new generation of experts on the subject.

- In the medical sphere courts rely heavily on
  1) A clear diagnosis
  2) Convincing aetiology
  3) Statement as to the time frame involved
  4) In injury cases estimates of the degrees of force and discomfort.
  5) Should we be organising a mini pupillage system for our doctors – spend time with a judge on kids cases?
Child protection- a clash of cultures?

- Case records of 240 children examined from the Child protection unit. 2010- 2014
- Cross sectional descriptive study
- 5 infants with scalding injuries to the genitalia- mothers pour water at high temperatures from a milk can to cleanse the genitalia.
- One case of flame burns of the feet in an infant with seizures and managed by a traditional healer
- 180 cases(75%) of cases had families who settled for compensation by the perpetrators.
10 prosecutions representing 5% of total cases

Conclusion. This straightforward study shows that cultural beliefs and practices cause significant harm to Ghanaian children.

Financial insecurity, poverty and respect for the elderly are a hindrance to child protection.
- A lack of comprehensive statistical data
- Low capacity and poor coordination of implementing partners compromise the effectiveness of the child protection system
Pictures of recent cases in Korle Bu
Examination findings: ARMS/CHEST/ABDOMEN

- Chest and cardiovascular findings normal
- Abdomen: full, tender, with guarding
- Right shoulder: swollen, warm and tender with restricted movements
- Distal forearm: swollen and tender
Examination findings: GENITALIA

- Bruise on the mons pubis extending to the right labium majus
- Small amount of blood at the introitus
- Hymen not assessed
- Dark patches over the right buttock.
Case Presentation

X-Ray of arm

- Fracture of distal radius and ulna of both upper limbs
- Old fracture of the surgical neck of right shoulder with early callus formation
SEXUAL ABUSE

Case Presentation

X-ray of leg

- Transverse fracture of right tibia and greenstick fracture of right fibula
Pictures of recent cases in Korle Bu
Pictures of cases in Korle Bu-picked up by a resident now here!
Pictures of recent cases in Korle Bu
Pictures of recent cases in Korle Bu
Pictures of recent cases in Korle Bu

[Diagram of a medical case with annotations:]
- Intracranial: swelling, cracked, black lip
- Swollen, cracked, black lip
- Surrounding erythematous, denuded skin
- Black necrotic tissue
- 5 cm x 2 cm
- 7 mm

Internal + external
Lesions consistent with liquefactive necrosis.

Form M.R.14

B. Sztukowski, MD, FRCP(c)
Conclusion and way forward

- The focus on the rights of man was the foundation for the French revolution.
- Rosseau, French philosopher, talked about the joie de vivre of childhood. The excitement, enthusiasm, excitement, and intensity of childhood.
- Ghana must endeavor to give these qualities to our children to secure our future.
- New national child policy framework in place - 2014.
- Draws on strength of existing community structures and traditions
- Consultations must be made with key child protection stakeholders, local communities and community leaders to discuss the role of the District social welfare and community development departments and their relationship to communities
- Explore roles of community health workers, teachers, Queen Mothers, Chiefs, religious leaders in the child and family welfare delivery system
- Improve access to justice by children – develop a comprehensive child justice policy
- Strengthen information management systems – disaggregated data should be collected by the police, welfare/probation officers, courts and correctional centres.
- Strengthen human resources across child protection sector- develop standardized certificate based training courses
- Delivered on an in service basis
- Capacity building programmes to help build skills of community mediators and Chiefs in child friendly mediation of juvenile cases
- Review and revise curriculum of the school of social work to provide a more culturally appropriate approach to social work
- Improve financial resources across child protection system – e.g. Help DSW in planning, budgeting and advocating for greater resources
conclusion

- Ghana has made significant progress in establishing a policy environment for the protection of children.
- Child protection systems is made up of several distinct, yet inter related components which must work together in a coordinated manner.
- Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you sincerely for listening to me!
References

- A situational analysis of Ghanaian children and women. UNICEF 2011
- Mapping and Analysis of Ghana’s child protection system. UNICEF document 2013
Thank You