



## International Journal of Allied Medical Sciences and Clinical Research (IJAMSCR)

ISSN:2347-6567

IJAMSCR |Volume 4 | Issue 4 | Oct - Dec- 2016  
www.ijamscr.com

Case report

Medical research

### Heat of a moment takes life of innocent own kid- A rare case report

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#### ABSTRACT

Murder, domestic violence, child abuse, rape and other crimes are daily headlines nowadays. These crimes have been integral part of our social structure since the inception of human existence and find place in all religious books too. Economical, political & sociological factors are relevant in explaining the root causes for these disasters but at the heart of all the crimes are people. Most extreme form of human relationships gone wrong is seen when any crime is committed against children. Children are vulnerable, dependent and easy targets for adults. More so, it is difficult to imagine that primary care givers i.e. parents can be part of heinous crime against their own children. Through this case report we will discuss in detail a case from rural Haryana, where an alcoholic man kills his own son because he was not given his dinner at time, by his wife. Till this date, wife used to be battered by him but it was a sad end for the kid that night.

**Keywords:** Child abuse, Injury to neck, Incised wound, Acute infarct, Refractory shock, Respiratory failure, Congestion, Acute Renal Failure

#### INTRODUCTION

Murder, robbery, arson, fraud, domestic violence, child abuse, extortion, rape and other crimes have been in daily news. Even Bible has murder and fraud in its opening pages. Although economics, politics, socio-legal studies and sociology are all of great relevance to the consideration of crime and criminality, at the heart of all the crimes are people<sup>1</sup>. Most extreme form of human relationships gone wrong is seen when any

crime is committed against children. Children are vulnerable, dependent and easy targets for adults. We all live for four things viz food, comforts, sex and prestige. Exceptions are rare. All are important but still, how far can you think that a man would go to get his stomach filled, when he was told by his wife to wait for 10 minutes before she finished breastfeeding their son? Could jealous father syndrome as described by Albert Kreinheder be a valid explanation? T. S. Eliot said that half the harm that is done in this world is due to people who

want to feel important. They don't mean to do harm, but the harm that they cause does not interest them or they do not see it or they justify it because they are absorbed in the endless struggle to think well of themselves.

### CASE REPORT

We present a case of a 35 year old heavy drinker male, serial law offender, father of 2 male and 2 female kids; all between 6 months and 6 years, who came to his village home dead drunk at 10 PM on 13.4.15 and asked for food. His 30 year old wife, accustomed to this pattern of life, told him to wait for some time before feeding of the 6 month old kid got over. The man, deeply enraged, under the impulse did the unthinkable. He struck with knife that he was holding, his other kid of one and half years over the neck, who was playing nearby. At 3.10 AM of 14.4.15, child was admitted

in ENT casualty. Suddenly on 15.4.15, child stopped feeding and vomited. On 16.4.15, a florid grand mal epilepsy attack was seen. Pediatric department was contacted by the ENT resident and a CT scan of head was ordered, which was suggestive of non enhancing hypodensity at right frontotemporoparietooccipital area of brain with effacement of right ventricle and midline shift of 6 mm towards left suggesting acute infarct. Neurosurgery opinion was sought and the poor child was referred to better equipped health institutes on 17.4.15. Child was brought back to PGIMS Rohtak on 18.4.15 and admitted in pediatric ICU for shock and respiratory distress. Child developed acute renal failure and died on 24.4.15 at 9.45 PM with cause of death on death certificate as incised wounds with acute infarct with respiratory failure with acute renal failure with refractory shock. A case of murder was registered against the father by the mother of the child.

### LEGENDS





Transudate	Exudate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protein &lt; 30 g/dL</li> <li>• LDH &lt; 200 u</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protein &gt; 30 g/dL (or pleural/serum protein ratio &gt; 0.5)</li> <li>• LDH &gt; 200 u (or pleural/serum ratio &gt; 0.6)</li> </ul>
Often bilateral	Often unilateral
<b>Colour</b>	<b>Colour</b>
Usually clear, serous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serous (TB, RA)</li> <li>• Cloudy (infection)</li> <li>• Bloody (cancer, PE, TB)</li> </ul> In parapneumonic effusions, if pH < 7.2, high probability that effusion is infected (empyema)
<b>Common causes</b>	<b>Common causes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cardiac failure</li> <li>• Nephrotic syndrome</li> <li>• Hepatic cirrhosis</li> <li>• Hypoalbuminaemia (malnutrition, chronic disease, malabsorption)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bacterial pneumonia</li> <li>• Carcinoma (primarily bronchial or secondary)</li> <li>• Mesothelioma</li> </ul>
<b>Unusual causes</b>	<b>Unusual causes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pericardial constriction</li> <li>• Meig's syndrome (ovarian fibroma associated with right pleural effusion)</li> <li>• Myxoedema</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TB</li> <li>• Haemothorax</li> <li>• Pancreatitis</li> <li>• Sub-phrenic abscess</li> <li>• Autoimmune disease</li> <li>• Chylothorax (from a leaking thoracic duct [trauma, neoplasia] — only left sided)</li> <li>• Yellow nail syndrome (abnormal lymph drainage leading to yellow nails, pleural effusion and lymphoedema)</li> </ul>

Courtesy- <http://www.ataglanceseries.com/medicine/flashcards>

### Autopsy Findings

Dead body was of an 80 cm long, moderately built male child.

#### Following injuries were seen over the body

A partially healed, hypo-pigmented stitched wound of 2.5 cm length with 3 stitches in situ, placed horizontally, being situated 3 cm from midline on the right side of neck over its front, 4 cm below the angle of mandible. On dissection, underlying tissues were ecchymosed.

Another partially healed, hypo-pigmented stitched wound of 2 cm length with 2 stitches in situ, placed obliquely, being situated 4 cm from midline on the left side of neck over its front, 3 cm below the angle of mandible. On dissection, underlying tissues were ecchymosed.

Brain was congested, edematous and softened. Both pleural cavities contained about 150 cc of straw colored pleural fluid on each side. Right chamber of heart contained blood and left was

empty. Lungs were congested and frothy fluid oozed out on cut-section. Solid viscera were congested.

#### Investigations

Pleural fluid was sent for biochemical analysis. Whole brain, heart, pieces of lungs, liver, spleen, and kidneys were preserved for Histopathological examination. Biochemical analysis of Pleural fluid showed protein level of 1.8 gm % & sugar level of 5 mg %. HP Examination showed congestion of brain & liver; deep congestion of both Kidneys and features of Acute Glomerulonephritis; edema and congestion of both the lungs. Normal values of Pleural Fluid proteins are between 1-2 gm//dl and sugars between 60-100 mg/dl. Common causes of low glucose include infection like pneumonia, malignancy, tuberculosis, hemothorax and Churg-Strauss syndrome.

## Opinion

Opinion as to the cause of death was ascertained to be antemortem injuries and their complications.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

WHO's standing committee describes child abuse as which results in actual/potential physical harm from an interaction or lack of interaction, which is reasonable with control of a parent/person in position of responsibility. Various risk factors responsible for child abuse are child factors, parental factors including alcohol and environmental factors. Filicide is murder of own off-spring, feticide is killing of the fetus in utero, neonaticide is killing the child with 24 hours of birth & mother is the perpetrator in most of the cases, infanticide is killing of a child within 30 days of birth.<sup>2</sup> Unexpected deaths are most common in 2-3 months of age.<sup>3</sup> According to Hippocrates, state of childhood is most exposed to danger around 40<sup>th</sup> day. After surviving this period, next 2 years are most crucial. In USA in 1995, in child murders of less than 1 year of age, 85-90% cases were due to craniocerebral injuries and in age group of 1 to 4 years, 55% deaths were due to craniocerebral injuries and 45% due to blunt injuries. In USA, in year 1999 out of total 280 cases of child murder between age group of 1-4 years; hands, feet, fists were used to kill the child in 123 cases, firearms in 39 cases, blunt weapons in 33 cases, asphyxia in 16 cases, knives in 10 cases and method not stated by the murderer in 59 cases. In USA in 2005, 1460 children were murdered and 67% cases were due to neglect or abuse.<sup>4</sup> Main causes in 0-2 years remain battery including neglect/starving. Impulse/angry homicide includes punished/scalded child, who may be well cared for except fatal injury.<sup>5</sup> Only a trivial incident causes the murder like son annoying the father with most common fatal injury sites being head & neck followed by buttocks, trunk and arms. Murder of own child occurs in all types of families with many indicted parents being lonely, angry and under

depression. Resnick's theory tries to categorize murderer parents as follows-

1. altruistic- murders to relieve imaginary/ real suffering
2. accidental-beats the child to death without intention
3. revenge- murders the child to retaliate against the spouse
4. unwanted- murders the child as it was not wanted
5. psychotic

As per forensic psychiatry principles, if the accused did the act while in a state of voluntary intoxication, he will be presumed to have known that it was so imminently dangerous that it must in all probability, cause death; & if the presumption is not rebutted, accused will be held guilty of murder.<sup>6</sup>

In Britain, Children's Act of 1989 defines that child welfare is parent's prime responsibility. In USA in 26 states, if the parents think that one day, they may do some harm to their kid, the mother can leave the child in church or any adoption home without being asked any question. Article 3 of UN convention of children's rights states that any decision involving children should be focused on their best interests. Human rights act of 1998, relating to children categorically emphasizes in article 2; right to life and in article 3; prohibition of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.<sup>7</sup> US Federal Law defines child abuse & neglect as mental injury, physical injury, poisoning, sexual abuse, exploitation, neglect, nutritional deprive, maltreatment of an individual of age less than 18 years by a person who is responsible for child's welfare under circumstances, which indicate that the child's health or welfare is harmed/ threatened.

We conclude that proper history taking, meticulous autopsy, sound inter-departmental co-ordination, preservation of all samples required, follow up of the cases is very important in arriving at a sound outcome in these crucial cases as future of our society depends on how we treat our children, their needs and issues related to them.

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**How to cite this article:** Gaurav Sharma, Dinesh Chhillar, Vijay Pal Khanagwal, S.K.Dhattarwal, Sunil Narwal, Deepshikha. Heat of a moment takes life of innocent own kid- A rare case report. Int J of Allied Med Sci and Clin Res 2016; 4(4): 663-667.

**Source of Support:** Nil. **Conflict of Interest:** None declared.