What To Do When Physical Abuse Is Suspected In A Child Under 2 Years Old

Determine if forensic evidence will be collected prior to bathing and removal of clothing.

History

Complete history, including:

- Review available prior medical records (PCP, ED, Inpatient and CPS)
- Review prior radiologic examinations that were performed at referring hospitals
- Review prior photographs

Physical

Complete physical examination, especially:

- Growth parameters
- Inspection of all body parts and thorough skin exam
- Palpation of legs, arms, hands, feet and ribs to feel for crepitus or deformities
- Complete neurologic examination
- Oral examination with attention to the lip, tongue, buccal mucosa, frenula, palate and teeth
- Auricle exam
- Inspection of the scalp and hair
- Genitalia examination

Consults

- Hospital Social Work
- Pediatric ophthalmologist; ask for photographs of the retina
- Medical photography when available even if CPS also takes photos
- Request an official radiology reading and upload image of outside films
- SANE (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner) if concern of concurrent sexual abuse ≤96 hrs prior to presentation
- Consider Neurosurgery, Ortho, ENT

Diagnostic tests

Consider:

- CBC with platelets, LFTs, amylase/lipase, PT/PTT, UA and stool guaiac
- UDS/Toxicology
- Skeletal survey with oblique views of ribs
- Brain imaging (CT acutely; MRI for follow-up)
- Forensic Evidence Kit per SANE consult

Documentation

- History obtained, from whom
- Physical findings with drawings and measurements
- Tests ordered/performed and results
- Impression: suspected physical abuse

Do not attempt to further interpret findings if uncertain.

- FAX Impact statement to CPS or police, if applicable

Reporting

Call NYS Mandated Reporter Hotline 1-800-635-1522 to make a report.

- Ask them to check if there are other children in the home. They must be evaluated by their PCP.
- Ask for a scene investigation, if necessary.

As a licensed professional, you are required to report suspected abuse. A referral to the child abuse expert is not the same as a hotline report to Child Protective Services.

At discharge from the hospital

- Document head circumference and other growth parameters.
- Make appointments with PCP and other sub-specialists if applicable.
- Fax script for follow-up skeletal survey to be performed 2 weeks from date of incident.

Further Information


http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;119/6/1232

Botash AS. Child Abuse Evaluation and Treatment for Medical Providers. 2010

http://www.ChildAbuseMD.com

Ann S. Botash MD and the CARE Program for the Child Abuse Medical Provider Program.

www.CHAMPprogram.com