

Smoke & Mirrors: Suspecting Medical Child Abuse

Definition of Medical Child Abuse:

Includes the fabrication, exaggeration or induction of symptoms resulting in the child receiving harmful or potentially harmful medical treatment at the instigation of the caregiver. (Roesler, TA, and Jenny, C. Medical Child Abuse: Beyond Munchausen by Proxy, 2008, Elk Grove Village, American Academy of Pediatrics Press.)

Also known as:

- Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy
- Pediatric Condition Falsification
- Factitious Disorder by Proxy
- Induced Illness by Proxy
- Fictitious Illness by Proxy

Symptoms can be:

- ⇒ **Exaggeration** of existing medical problem
- ⇒ **Fabrication** of symptoms/disorder, lab reports/specimens
- ⇒ **Persuasion**
- ⇒ **Simulation**
- ⇒ **Induction**

General Concepts:

- ◆ Symptoms observed only by perpetrator
- ◆ Battery of diagnostic tests are negative
- ◆ Symptoms do not respond to treatment
- ◆ Clinical presentation is not consistent with reported history
- ◆ Medical history cannot be substantiated
- ◆ Evaluated by multiple medical providers and multiple institutions

Diagnosis

- ⇒ Thorough review of all medical records
- ⇒ Medical community must communicate
- ⇒ Medical problems must be ruled out
- ⇒ Must involve CPS
- ⇒ **Child abuse expertise is essential**

*****The hallmark of Medical Child Abuse is resolution of symptoms when separation from parent/perpetrator occurs!**

