Child Abuse Pediatrics Research Network: The CAPNET Core Data Project

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OBJECTIVE: Examine the epidemiology of subspecialty physical abuse evaluations within CAPNET, a multicenter child abuse pediatrics research network. METHODS: We conducted a cross-sectional study of children <10 years old who underwent an evaluation (in-person or remote) by a child abuse pediatrician (CAP) due to concerns for physical abuse at ten CAPNET hospital systems from February 2021 through December 2021. RESULTS: Among 3667 patients with 3721 encounters, 69.4% were < 3 years old; 44.3% < 1 year old, 59.1% male; 27.1% Black; 57.8% White, 17.0% Hispanic; and 71.0 % had public insurance. The highest level of care was outpatient/emergency department in 60.7%, inpatient unit in 28.0% and intensive care in 11.4%. CAPS performed 79.1% in-person consultations and 20.9% remote consultations. Overall, the most frequent injuries were bruises (35.2%), fractures (29.0%), and traumatic brain injuries (TBI) (16.2%). Abdominal (1.2%) and spine injuries (1.6%) were uncommon. TBI was diagnosed in 30.6% of infants but only 8.4% of 1-year old children. In 68.2% of cases a report to child protective services (CPS) was made prior to CAP consultation; in 12.4% a report was made after CAP consultation. CAPs reported no concern for abuse in 43.0% of cases and mild / intermediate concern in 22.3%. Only 14.2% were categorized as definite abuse. CONCLUSION: Most children in CAPNET were <3 years old with bruises, fractures, or intracranial injuries. CPS reports were frequently made prior to CAP consultation. CAPs had a low level of concern for abuse in majority of cases.

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