

Profile of medico-legal cases registered at a tertiary care children's hospital.

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Background & introduction: A medico-legal case (MLC) is a case of injury or ailment where attending doctor after taking history and clinical examination of the patient thinks that some investigations by law enforcing agencies are essential so as to fix responsibility regarding the case. It is the responsibility of a registered medical practitioner to judge each and every case properly and in doubtful cases, it is mandatory to inform the police as required by law. This saves the doctor from unnecessary and needless allegations later. Emergency/casualty department is the backbone of every hospital for all the medical and surgical emergencies and also for huge number of medico-legal cases (e.g. accidents, assaults, burns, poisoning, suicide, homicide, any suspicious deaths, unknown children's and cases referred from police or court). There is a paucity of information of medico legal cases in pediatric population in published scientific literature. This study analysis the patterns, social factors and the clinical outcomes of medico legal cases in Delhi.

Methods: Hospital based observational study over one year period in paediatric emergency unit of tertiary hospital in Delhi. Study included 238 medico-legal cases of both genders up to the age of 18 years. Details were collected from victim's attendants and police on a predesigned proforma.

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Profile of Pediatric MLC cases

Results: 188(79%) were males and 58 (21%) were females. Mostly from urban slum areas (53.78%). Majority of the medico-legal cases were due to routine medical examination for fitness of abandoned children's (26.89%) followed by poisoning (23.10%), trauma (16%), road traffic accident (8%) & assault (13.33%). Most of the MLC cases were reported in casualty within 1 hour through PCR police. In this majority of the MLC cases were discharged after treatment (78.99%) and 2 children (4.72%) expired.

Conclusions: This study shows the prevalence of medico-legal cases in a tertiary care hospital. Majority of the cases were males and adolescents. There is an urgent need to focus more on this vulnerable age group. Moreover, there is a need of awareness on the part of treating pediatricians about these medico legal cases and to handle the victims empathetically and at the same time follow the legal procedures diligently as per the law of the land.

Key message: Adolescent age is a vulnerable group & needs lot of support from families, community and various organizations including health so as to have a more stress-free life. Need for more awareness & training of pediatricians about dealing with MLC cases.

EXPERT COMMENT

“There is a high load of MLC cases in pediatric age group particularly in adolescent age. Knowledge of type of cases, help doctors to plan services in hospital causality and law enforcement agencies to plan preventive & corrective measures too. It is the duty of attending doctor to judge each and every case thoroughly and in case of doubt to inform police. All medical professionals irrespective of their specialty should be trained in all aspects of medico- legal work. It will save them later unnecessary litigations.”

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With warm regards,

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Reference

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