

Building a subspecialty in child abuse pediatrics to improve care

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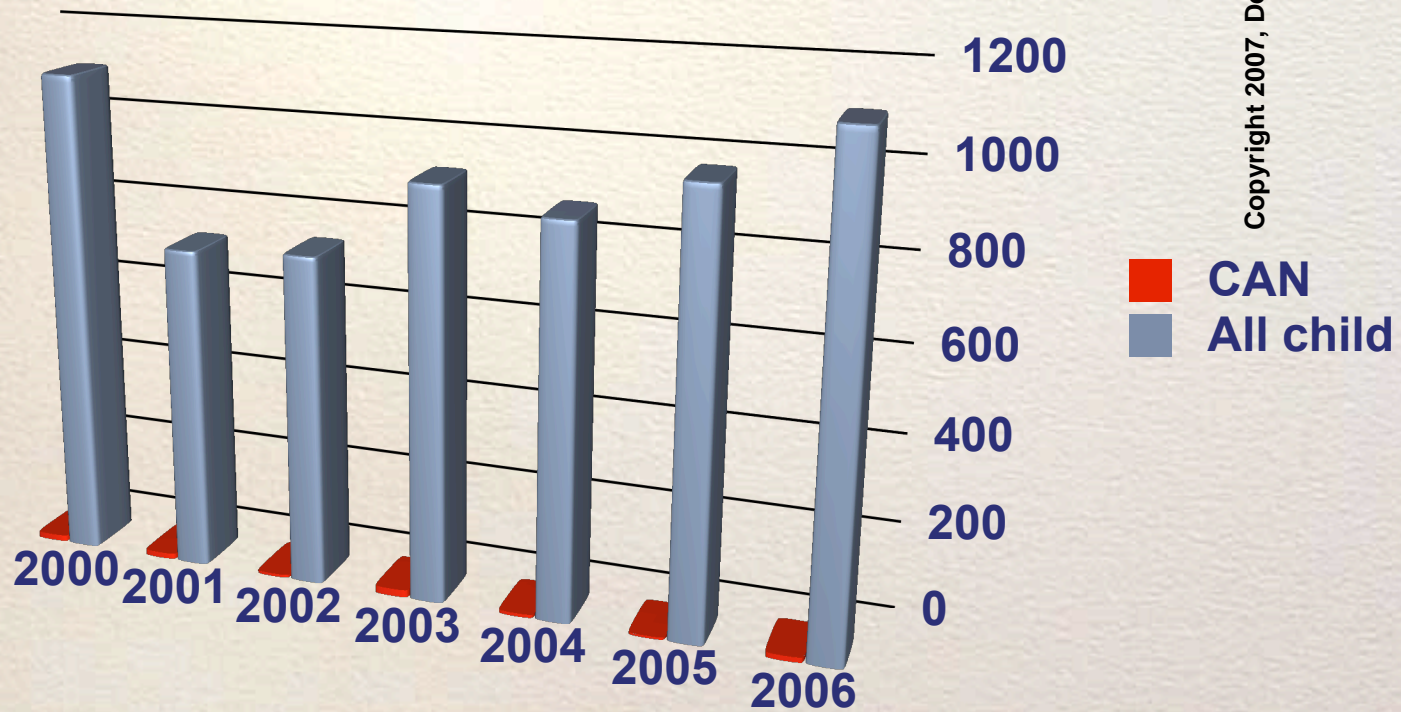
Chronic Neglect over many years

- 1990- US Advisory Board recommended research centers- noting lack of research
- 1993 US IOM called for addressing key child maltreatment research
- 1998- US IOM again said leadership needed in research, resources, evaluation of child abuse
- No NIH study section addressing this issue

Since I joined APHA in 1972 declining interest in child abuse



APHA: Child abuse meeting abstracts compared to all abstracts on children



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Confronting Chronic Neglect

- IOM report released on 9/11/2001 at 9:00 am
- Examining the preparation of health professionals in child abuse & neglect
 - “the training and education of health professionals about family violence are often inadequate to enable them to intervene effectively. Health professionals commonly report lack of support and feeling ill equipped and frustrated in dealing with family violence victims”
 - “To date there has been little response to calls for improvements in the research base, increased funding, or collaboration among those concerned about family violence”

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Observations in the 2001 report

- “Funding for research, education development and testing, and curricular evaluation on family violence is fragmented... No consistent federal sources of support for education research on family violence appear to exist.”

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2001 Report Recommendation

- Health professional organizations including but not limited to the AAMC, the AMA, ... & health professional educators should develop & provide guidance to their members, constituents, institutions, and other stakeholders. (*APHA not mentioned*)
- This guidance should address
 - (1) competency areas for professional curricula,
 - (2) strategies to teach about family violence,
 - (3) approaches to barriers to training on family violence,
 - (4) approaches to promoting & sustaining behavior change.



The Pediatric Perspective

- The NIH, for years, explicitly avoided child abuse by policy
 - Deficient knowledge base
 - Few investigators as academic centers seek faculty capable of external funding
- Medical Centers lose money providing specialty services in child abuse
- Vanishingly few academic experts in area among 125 medical schools

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Pediatric Response

- Formation of Ray E. Helfer Society to honor and increase visibility of child abuse physicians in all fields of medicine
 - Founded in 1999
 - 80 physicians invited to join
 - 7 annual meetings later - 160 members & 65 fellows
 - Lively scientific exchange & network for pediatricians, family physicians, psychiatrists, pathologists, and pediatric radiologists



Pediatric Response 2

- New subspecialty board in Child Abuse Pediatrics in 2006
- First board application in 1999
 - Deferred due to concerns about knowledge base & response of general pediatricians
- Second application 2005
 - new survey of pediatricians revealed wide support:
 - “when the going gets tough, especially with critical, challenging diagnoses and related court appearances, the availability of a subspecialist ... is preferred by many”
 - Volume of medical & public health literature exceeds other approved specialties (e.g. adolescent medicine)



Child Abuse Pediatrics

- Approved by Am. Board of Pediatrics in 2005
- Established by Am. Board of Medical Specialties in 2006
- 6 Board members appointed to design exam in 2007
- First specialty exam in 2009, Exams at 2 year intervals
- “grandfathering” phase ends at 3rd exam
- Will require 3 years of clinical & research training

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Intent of Child Abuse Pediatrics

- Academic specialty training for faculty
- Not intended to displace other doctors doing exams
- NIH & other funding agencies will see importance of field and its cadre of trained investigators
- Medical schools without experts will bring on faculty
- Currently less than 1/2 of US medical schools have tenure track experts, the goal is to increase visibility and expertise that all will feel need
- Estimated need for at least 375 specialists

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Other Initiatives

- Health CARES: Child Abuse Research, Education and Service Centers-
 - multidisciplinary centers proposed by Helfer Society & AAP
 - little traction in Congress but embodies IOM recommendations
- Pediatric SANE Nurses
 - Specialized training in the examination of child sexual abuse victims by SANE nurses

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Conclusions

- Child abuse is a problem not well recognized by academia, pediatrics, the NIH or the APHA
 - CDC has made child abuse a focus of the National Center for Injury Control and Prevention
- Efforts by the US Advisory Board & the IOM have not drawn significant attention to the issue
- The creation of a new research-oriented medical specialty is intended to improve the quality of care and the research attention on child abuse
- Parallel efforts at the NIH & CDC to develop research training are needed

