

The Prevention of War Related Deaths
of Children: The Advocacy Role of
Pediatricians and the American
Academy of Pediatrics

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“No financial, commercial, research
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Background

- [The Impact of War on Child Health in the Countries of the Former Yugoslavia](#) (IOM 1995)
 - The role of doctors as a conscience of the community deserves more consideration in times of stress and under difficult circumstances such as war. *Pediatricians and children's doctors in particular have a professional obligation to act to protect children under such circumstances.....*

Background

- American Academy of Pediatrics
 - 60,000 pediatricians
 - Committed to optimal physical, mental, and social health and well-being for all infants, children, adolescents and young adults
 - “Dedicated to the health of all children”

Children and Armed Conflict

- According to surveys by UNICEF
 - In Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 55% of children had been shot at, 66% had been in a situation where the expected to die, and 29% felt “unbearable sorrow.”

Section on International Child Health- AAP Newsletter, Fall, 2004

- In Angola, 66% of children had seen people being murdered and 67% had seen people being tortured, beaten or hurt
- In Rwanda, 56% had seen children kill people, nearly 80% had lost immediate family members and 16% had been forced to hide under dead bodies.
- More than 60% of the children did not care whether they every grew up

Rights of the Child

- January 1990 Convention on the Rights on the Child adopted by U.N. General Assembly and signed by 61 countries, except the U.S. and Somalia
- In time of war the Convention requires nations to ensure respect for international humanitarian rules of war, to refrain from recruiting or otherwise involving in armed conflict children under age 15

Historically

- Pediatric community can make a tremendous contribution by providing support and technical assistance to the organizations and local communities who continue to struggle to support children in conflict
 - Section on International Child Health- AAP Newsletter, Fall, 2004

Method

- Survey development by a Hospital based pediatric solo physician practice
- Received administrated support from the State AAP Chapter
- First offered for presentation in 2006

Method

- A review of AAP Newsletters 2004-2005; 2008-2010
- AAP Policy Statements 2004-2005; 2008-2010
- *Pediatrics* 2004-2005; 2008-2010
- Survey Pediatricians in Southwest Pennsylvania 2005

Statement or reference regarding the *prevention* of pediatric deaths in a wartime conflict.

AAP Newsletters

- Review of AAP Newsletters (2004-2005 and 2008-2010)
 - Comments on the Rights of Children
 - No specific comment on prevention of pediatric deaths in a wartime conflicts

AAP Policy Statements

- A review of policy statements (2003-2010)
 - March 2010 Health Equity and Children's Rights
 - Promoting the principles and practice of equity-based clinical care, child advocacy, child and family centered public policy will help to ensure health and well being of children

- 2005 AAP annual meeting presentation on Children's Rights and Children's Health
 - Jeff Goldhagen, MD, MPH
 - Physical needs
 - Social and cultural needs
 - Intellectual, psychological and emotional

Pediatrics

- Psychosocial Implications of Disaster or Terrorism on Children (Sept 05)
- Young Children's Reactions to War Related Stress: A Survey and Assessment of Innovative Intervention (Jan 08)

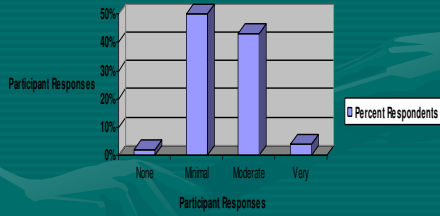
Survey

- An 8 question survey
- Pediatricians to rate their activity in AAP
- Understanding of AAP's stand on war
 - 449 surveys mailed
 - 126 returned
 - 28% on 2 attempts

PA Pediatrician activity in AAP

- Very active - (5) 4%
- Moderately active (53) 43%
- Minimally active (62) 50%
- None (2) 2%

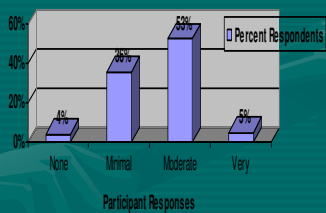
Level of Pediatrician Activity in AAP



2005 Survey Results

- “Do you feel the AAP takes a strong political/advocacy position on war and its effects on children worldwide”
 - 5% AAP takes strong political advocacy
 - 53% moderate political advocacy
 - 36% minimal position
 - 4% no role on this issue

Graph 2: Political Advocacy of the AAP on War and its Effects on Children (n=121)

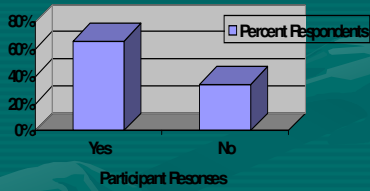


- “Should the AAP more formally address the issue of war and its effect on children”

- 66% Should more formally address this issue

- 34% AAP should not

Graph 3: Should AAP more formally address the issue of war and its effect on children world-wide (n=119)



- “Would you consider a greater level of participation in the AAP if the Academy more formally addressed issues of war and poverty”

- 36% would become more active

- 64% would not consider increase in activity

Conclusion

- Programs have been established or supported by the AAP that address the plight of refugees. However, there seems to be a lack of direct, political advocacy by the AAP regarding war and how to prevent pediatric deaths, injury and hardship in these environments.

Conclusion

- Requires a world view of “community”
- Enhance the public health training of pediatricians
- Direct community pediatricians into the community

Large population public health initiatives

- Example:
 - Only one large population based school based bullying prevention initiative in the U.S.
 - 300,000 children
 - 400 schools
 - \$9 million
