

Homicide of children: A study of 45 cases- H Abouzahir- CHU Ibn Rochd, Morocco

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Abstract

Child homicides are relatively rare but constitute dramatic events. Our study aims to profile the victim and the perpetrator, the circumstances of the homicide and types of lesions found during autopsy. It is a retrospective study of 45 cases of children victims of homicide, collected in the Department of Forensic Medicine CHU Ibn Rochd of Casablanca, over a period of 15 years running from January 2002 to December 2016. The victims were male in 67% of the cases and their age varied between one month and 17 years. 29% of victims were under the age of 5 years and 40% were between 15 and 17 years of age. The perpetrator was a mother in 20%, a father in 18%, a neighbor in 27%, a family member in 4%, a friend in 9% of the cases, a known person in 16% of cases and unknown in 6% of cases. The assault occurred in the victim's home in 53% of the cases and on the public road in 47% of the cases. It involved the use of a blunt object in 27% of cases and a blade in 22% of cases, a fall in 20%, a burn in 11% of cases, strangulation in 7%, drug poisoning in 9% of cases and a child shaken in 2% of cases. The mechanism of aggression remains unknown in 2% of cases. According to autopsy, the cause of death was cranial trauma in 10 cases (22%), thoracic trauma in 8 cases (18%), abdominal trauma in 8 cases (18%), mechanical asphyxia in 3 cases (7%) and thermal burns in 5 cases (11%). The majority of child homicides involve the victim's circle. The reason for admission of these traumatized children does not always refer to assault, hence the principal rule for the physician to suspect a criminal fact behind any undocumented trauma in young children.