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Communicating with Peers

Case Study: Possible Violence on a Five Months Baby

Presentation

Some parents arrive to the emergency department referring that their five months baby has fallen from the crib. In physical examination, a decrease in the child's level of consciousness is striking. An x-ray of the skull is performed which shows a cranial fracture, which is why cranial CT is performed in which other cranial fractures are evident, as well as hematomas in different evolutionary stages, which makes the radiologist suspect that it is a non-accidental cranium-encephalic trauma. It is a matter of explaining to parents the suspicion and the need to initiate judicial actions.

Communication

This is a very complicated situation since the certainty in these cases never becomes absolute and is a sensitive issue as it can cause serious legal problems for parents consistent from restraining orders to jail terms. That is why you have to keep your head cold in these cases and not be carried away by the emotions, trying to always adopt a neutral position.

The most important and complicated part is to transmit to the parents the idea that the trauma seems to be not accidental and that a series of measures is going to be carried out. This is where **conflict resolution** and **rapid decision making** takes part. In these cases, one of the measures that may be more effective is to establish a greater role of parents, indicating that the situation in which the child is and the evidence **“suggests”** that it is a non-accidental trauma and that the medical team is **“forced by protocol”** to carry out certain measures like warning the social services as well as the judge of guard. It is important in these situations **not to look for culprits**, but to demonstrate that **everything is done for the well-being of the child**.

It must be pointed out that a series of temporary measures will be taken and that the medical team remains at parents' disposal.

Differential Diagnosis

In addition to non-accidental cranium-encephalic trauma, there is a great variety of diagnostic possibilities, but we could include of bone fragility disorder or a coagulopathy.

Evolution

Social services and guard court are notified, granting a restraining order from the parents temporarily while the child is admitted for study. Then the suspicion would be later confirmed.



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