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Evaluating the best interests of the child - a model of multidisciplinary teamwork

J. Sever^{1,2}, R. Finzi^{1,2}, P. Golubchik^{1,2}. ¹ *Child and Adolescent Outpatient Unit, Geha Mental Health Center, Petach Tikva, Israel*
² *Sackler Faculty of Medicine, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel*

This presentation describes the rationale, goals and procedure of a working model of multidisciplinary teamwork in conducting clinical evaluations of children and families and preparing expert testimony. Over the past five years, the team has evaluated over 60 cases involving child abuse and neglect, and questions of parental ability. Teamwork can reduce the distorting effects of personal biases, beliefs and countertransference issues. The contribution of integrating different theoretical viewpoints (theories of development, object relations, family systems, etc) is discussed. Recommendations include: (a) separation of roles of expert witness and therapist; (b) utilization of different diagnostic tools (psychodiagnostic tests, observations of interaction, joint clinical interviews, etc); (c) value of examining the feasibility of the recommendations with parents, care givers and community workers; and (d) strategies of dispute resolution and attainment of parental consent, utilizing the effects of potential judicial power and focusing on the best interests of the child.

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Cognitive deficits after traumatic brain injury - does lesion site affect effort?

A. Stevens¹, P.T. Merten², E. Friedel³. ¹ *Klinik für Psychiatrie und Psychotherapie, Universität Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany* ² *Vivantes Netzwerk für Gesundheit, Klinikum im Friedrichshain, Klinik für Neurologie, Berlin, Germany* ³ *Klinik für Psychiatrie und Psychotherapie, Universität Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany*

Background and aims: Traumatic brain injury (TBI) may lead to enduring cognitive and emotional deficits. Assessment of such deficits by psychological testing requires testing for effort and cooperativeness, especially when litigation is involved. How strong is the effect of effort and does lesion site, especially frontal lobe damage, influence effort?

Methods: N= 208 subjects with TBI were assessed between 2004 and 2006 by a neurological, a psychiatric and a psychological examination. The referral sources were the German workers compensation board and private insurance companies. The psychological battery comprised measures of memory, attention, cognitive speed and intelligence as well as self report instruments for assessment of psychiatric symptoms. Effort was assessed with the WMT (Green 2003). Lesion site and type was available through reports on brain CAT scans and MRIs. Assessment was done a median 25 months after the injury.

Results: The results indicate that effort explained the largest share (50%) of the variance in psychological tests scores. There was no effect for lesion site on effort. A factor analysis on test scores produced a two factor solution, with the largest loadings on effort.

Conclusions: It is evident that in cases involved in litigation the performance in neuropsychological assessment is mainly explained by effort. However, there was no evidence, that injury to some brain areas would specifically impair effort. The study adds support to the construct validity of effort testing and its robustness in frontal lobe damage.

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Aspects of forensic psychiatric estimation of the influence of totalitarian sects activity on the adherents mental health

V.V. Sushko. *Chair of Judicial Psychiatry, Odessa National Legal Academy, Odessa, Ukraine* *Chair of Psychiatry, Odessa State Medical University, Odessa, Ukraine*

Background: Every year the number of adherents of totalitarian sects in Ukraine grows. They are referred for forensic psychiatric examination more and more frequently, both in civil and criminal cases.

Aims: The purpose of our research was to determine the degree of harm done by the activity of totalitarian sects existing in Ukraine to the mental health of their adherents. To create standardised methodological approaches to the procedures of forensic psychiatric examination.

Methods: We examined adherents of different totalitarian sects directed to the Odessa psychiatric hospital N 1 for forensic psychiatric examination. Special cards were used, in which we registered the description of his/her mental state, and the data of psychological investigation.

Results: As a result of psychological techniques used in the totalitarian sects the adherents can easily develop new psychological characteristics, which are described in ICD-10, part F60.7 as the Dependent personality disorder. In particular, this disorder includes risk factors of the development of induced psychoses. The worsening of initial mental disorders (especially schizophrenia) was observed in many cases as a result of stressful influence (of psychogenic and somatogenic nature), to which the adherents were exposed.

Conclusion: To assess the extent of harm done to the adherents' mental health by the activity of totalitarian sects it is necessary to provide inpatient complex forensic psychiatric examination with the investigation of additional materials (audio- and video-records of the religious ceremonies).

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Visual arts therapy at turopolje correction institution

E. Susic, B. Svrznjak. *Department of Prisons, Ministry of Justice, Prison Hospital Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia*

This paper is a record of monitoring and evaluation of visual arts expression in six inmates subject to re-education measure at Turopolje Correctional Institution, minors showing disturbed behavioural patterns, with felonies record, difficulties in verbal expression, with various educational background, intellectual capacities, financial standing, from various categories of primary families and social and cultural milieus.

The goal was to establish how far expression through visual arts influenced the introspection process and resolving of conflicts without expert help, improved communication with the environment, adaptation to penal circumstances, development of positive behavioural patterns, psychological and social maturation processes. The inmates' expression through visual arts was also monitored as a non-verbal communication helping the involved expert in observation, diagnostics and therapy in cases of no or insufficient verbal communication.

The research was done by methods of systematic monitoring and data gathering.

The research showed that through visual arts the inmates articulated emotional and other problems more easily, adapted better to penal conditions, gained insight into their personal advancements. It also helped them develop skills and habits that in the future could help in the socialization and reintegration process as ultimate goals