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Editorial

Child neglect or neglect

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Negligence or child neglect

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Child abuse "...is widespread, but often hidden; it is a major public health problem and a violation of human rights...". (1)

The World Health Organization, in a 2022 publication, warned about child abuse as a global problem with serious consequences that last a lifetime, which it often remains hidden, and only a portion of children who are victims of abuse ever receive support from health professionals. (2)

Neglect is one of the forms of child abuse, and is defined as the failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional, educational and medical needs. (3)



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There are different types of child neglect: physical neglect, when a child lacks adequate food, clothing, shelter, supervision, and protection from harm; emotional neglect, when a child lacks affection, love, or other kinds of emotional support; educational neglect, when a child is not enrolled in school, ensures that the child attends, or provides home-based schooling; and medical neglect, when a child fails to receive adequate care or treatment for physical or mental injuries or disorders. (3)

Child neglect is one of the most difficult forms of child abuse to detect. Diagnosis and, crucially, prevention are crucial due to the negative consequences it has on a child's health, which can lead to permanent damage.

Many parents, guardians, or caregivers of children and adolescents are unaware that neglect, in its various forms, constitutes a form of child abuse. Therefore, information and training are of utmost importance so that a lack of knowledge does not become the cause of negligent behavior that can have avoidable consequences for children.

Given the variety of settings in which health conditions suggestive of child abuse due to neglect or negligence can arise, healthcare professionals require adequate training from their early years so they can identify, diagnose, and seek solutions.

Child abuse can be prevented before it starts, and it must be addressed from a multi-sectoral perspective. (2)

It is the fundamental responsibility of primary health care workers to develop strategies for preventing child abuse in all its forms, as they are the ones who interact with and care for children and adolescents in the community, health institutions, and the various settings where they grow and develop.

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