
FOREWORD

Child abuse and neglect constitutes a major problem that has an impact on over 1 million children in the United States each year. The safety of children is the responsibility of each member of society and reflects the values that social group places on the young. Yet many children in the United States remain unprotected or underprotected, exposed to abuse or neglect in a nation that leads the world in so many other areas. Clinicians Eileen Giardino and Angelo Giardino have done a superb job in providing guidelines for nurses to follow in protecting children.

Nurses interact with children, families, and caregivers daily and at all levels of care. They serve a major function in primary care situations, where most cases of abuse and neglect are detected. Therefore, it is appropriate that nurses be instrumental in equipping families and other caregivers for addressing child maltreatment issues.

If prevention of child maltreatment is the goal, then education is the principal means of achieving that goal. Educational interventions can be offered at every level of health-care and in the course of the nurse's daily functions. This textbook prepares the nurse to present detailed, evidence-based information in the context of caring for families.

Identifying high-risk situations is key in breaking the cycle of abuse. The development of interventions that target families in crisis is an important step that can derail potential maltreatment and guide families to more constructive solutions to the problems they face. Nurses can be instrumental in offering a framework to help families during home visits, when children are brought for well-child care examinations or routine immunizations, when they are seen in school nurse's offices, or when they make emergency department visits, among other scenarios.

Once a child is abused or neglected, nurses may provide interventions that are designed to help children and families heal. Their role in this process can have long-term effects, helping a child move into adulthood without many of the scars from abuse that can prove debilitating if not addressed. The nurse, along with other healthcare providers, can make the difference between the child growing up damaged and potentially abusive and the child becoming a well-adjusted and loving parent.

The chapters offered in this book address the critical areas nurses must be aware of as they face the issues of child maltreatment and neglect. With these tools in hand, the nurse will be equipped to function as a positive instrument of change for families and, eventually, future citizens.

Ann W. Burgess, DNSc, FAAN, RN
Professor of Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing
Boston College School of Nursing
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

FOREWORD

As is true for every professional who interacts with children, nurses are mandated reporters and, thereby, must notify appropriate authorities when they encounter cases of child maltreatment. Therefore, they are responsible for understanding what constitutes abuse or neglect, what signs and symptoms are indicative of child maltreatment, what identifies families at risk for developing a pattern of child maltreatment, and how to intervene effectively. The nurse's focus must be on the safety and well-being of the child.

Nurses interact with other healthcare providers in rendering care for families and children, playing a major role in the healthcare team. Nurses may be considered the eyes and ears as they are often the first healthcare professionals who notice signs and symptoms suspicious for maltreatment. Therefore, it is essential that they be well prepared to identify problems and make accurate assessments of the cause. Their ability to obtain a complete history and perform a thorough physical examination may be crucial in exposing abuse or neglect. This is particularly true when they are functioning as clinical nurse specialists or nurse practitioners and in independent nursing centers. They also need to be sensitive to the various verbal, physical, and behavioral cues that alert one to the possibility of maltreatment. Suspicions that are raised must be thoroughly evaluated and the possibility that abuse or neglect is present must be considered along with other diagnoses.

This book offers the nurse the tools required to fulfill these roles. We begin with the basics: a definition of the problem of child abuse and neglect, the presenting signs and symptoms of child maltreatment, obtaining a complete history, and conducting an appropriate interview and physical examination. Then, we move through the various aspects that must be considered in greater depth, such as laboratory findings and obtaining appropriate forensic specimens, dealing with sexually transmitted diseases, considering appropriate differential diagnoses, documentation, and mental health problems, to list a few. The rare but fascinating Munchausen syndrome by proxy is outlined, along with information pertinent to sexual abuse of adolescents. How the nurse can effectively interact with other professionals is addressed, with full chapters on child protective services and legal issues that occur with child maltreatment cases. The special risks that children face with respect to the Internet are also explored. These chapters should equip the nurse to be a well-informed and effective guardian of children's health.

The practical information that nurses require is often outlined in special sections focused on nursing interventions. These discussions detail the hands-on actions that nurses can take in specific situations.

Healthcare professionals can only function well when they are given adequate, accurate information. This textbook offers in-depth, well-documented information that should help guide nurses to be exceptional providers of healthcare to the families they encounter each day. The editors are to be thanked for assembling a dedicated team of authors who offer their expertise in the important area of child maltreatment education for nurses.

Diana K. Faugno, BSN, RN, CPN, FAAFS, SANE-A/A
Escondido, California

PREFACE

"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." Mark 10:14

Children represent the future, and the value placed on the life of a child reflects the society's fundamental attitudes toward life. As members of society who have chosen to express these attitudes in very practical terms, nurses are in a unique position. The nursing profession aspires to convey the highest level of care to all patients. Laws in all 50 states recognize this responsibility to provide care and, as such, nurses are mandated to protect the most vulnerable children and are clearly defined as mandated reporters of child maltreatment. Many children in the United States are vulnerable, and they are exposed to abuse or neglect. It is, therefore, appropriate that nurses play an instrumental role in serving children and families because they are often the first healthcare professionals to have contact with them when they come for care.

Nurses involved in all areas of practice must first of all recognize that child maltreatment is possible and include it within the possibilities raised in generating a list of differential diagnoses. They must be familiar with the signs and symptoms that suggest maltreatment, be aware of the types of situations where child maltreatment may be seen, and certainly be attuned to the various presentations that may be seen. In particular, nurses must notice and correctly interpret the verbal, physical, and behavioral cues that point to child maltreatment or neglect.

The nurse's role in the evaluation of abuse and neglect is expansive and includes intervening in all of the aspects of preventing abuse or neglect; assessing the history, physical examination, laboratory and diagnostic data; observing family and cultural life, and listening to the child to obtain a clear picture; and managing the cases of children with the focus maintained on the best interests of the child. Ensuring that the child will be kept safe and protected from the risk of further harm is a key goal.

Maltreatment in any form is a crime and requires the involvement of various agencies and law enforcement personnel. Nurses must be aware of the steps to be taken and be able to interface with counterparts in other professions to best serve the child and family concerns. The policies and procedures of each healthcare facility or place of employment must be known and followed.

This textbook was written with the goals of informing nurses about their role as mandated reporters, instructing nurses in how best to carry out their responsibilities in this area, and aiding nurses to intervene effectively. To these goals, a group of contributors has been assembled who present extensive material in each relevant area.

Part One: Overview discusses the statistical data connected with child maltreatment and points out the various presentations that may be seen. It is important to keep this overall perspective in mind and maintain a sense of context.

Part Two: Healthcare Evaluation offers practical steps to follow in obtaining a history, conducting interviews, performing a physical examination, and obtaining appropriate laboratory studies and collecting forensic specimens. This section also addresses the issues of sexually transmitted diseases, conditions mimicking child abuse, and neglect. Each of these is defined and clear explanations of what is required are offered. The documentation needed to move forward with forensic or legal steps is also explained in detail.

Part Three: Related Issues offers to educate the nurse regarding concerns peculiar to child maltreatment and neglect. How to approach mental health issues and what to expect in the way of behavioral responses are outlined. Special procedures and considerations related to adolescence are elucidated. The relatively rare but often sensational Munchausen syndrome by proxy is explained so that nurses may be informed of this possibility in formulating a differential diagnosis. The roles played by child protective services, social services, and the legal system are discussed with respect to the nurse's interactions with these entities. Domestic violence may complicate cases of child abuse, and a chapter is devoted to clarify the nurse's role in these difficult cases. A thorough explanation of the dangers of the Internet is offered, along with the nurse's role in preventing the abuse and neglect of children.

Within the text and in several appendices are various available resources to support the nurse in dealing with the repercussions of child maltreatment. The extensive references used in each chapter may be valuable to nurses who want to learn more and explore various issues in greater depth.

Putting together a project such as this is a work of purpose that brings a great deal of professional satisfaction and, of course, involves a great deal of hard work on the many people involved in such a large project. We would like to thank the many contributors who took on an extra academic project and spent many hours researching and writing these chapters; the anonymous peer reviewers for each chapter who provided a second set of eyes and helped us identify areas for improved clarity; our respective schools and departments who provided the scholarly environment for us to conceptualize and complete the book; the many publishers of books and journals who graciously permitted us to incorporate valuable copyrighted material within the chapters; and, finally, to the dedicated professionals at GW Medical who consistently supported this project and made it go from idea to printed words on printed pages. With their attention to detail, this book became a reality.

We hope that each reader will come away from this text better equipped and more fully prepared to advocate for our children.

Eileen R. Giardino, PhD, RN, CRNP
Angelo P. Giardino, MD, PhD, FAAP
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania