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Child Protection, why health care professionals need to be alert

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All children have the right to be protected from violence, exploitation and abuse. Yet, millions of children worldwide from all socio-economic backgrounds, across all ages, religions and cultures suffer violence, exploitation and abuse every day. Millions more are at risk (Unicef, 2011).

There is significant evidence that violence, exploitation and abuse can affect the child's physical and mental health in the short and longer term, impairing their ability to learn and socialize, and impacting their transition to adulthood with adverse consequences later in life.

The UAE gives top priority to children's care and development; this is evidenced in Federal Law No. 3 of 2016 concerning child rights, also known as Wadeema's Law (2016), stresses that all children must be provided with appropriate living standards, access to health services, education, equal opportunities in essential services and facilities without any kind of discrimination. The law protects children against all forms of negligence, exploitation, physical and psychological abuses (Federal Government of the UAE 2016).

Within the health services every member of staff has a responsibility for ensuring that children are protected as much as possible. It is important for staff to recognise the roles and responsibilities of colleagues in child protection, but this does not absolve them of responsibility or accountability in reporting or acting on reported concerns about a child who may be at risk.

As well as being in privileged positions to assist families under stress in proactive and practical ways, health-care professionals can contribute to identifying children who are in need of support or safeguarding. The evidence for safeguarding vulnerable children is supported by research carried out over many years. We know that many of the families who seek help for their children, or children about whom others raise concerns about welfare, are multiply disadvantaged and may be socially excluded (National Commission of Inquiry, 1996a).

Biography

Louise also worked as a Senior lecturer at a UK University for over 6 years teaching both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Louise is well published in the UK Nursing Press on a range of topics including Childhood Obesity and NAFLD. She currently works for Amana Healthcare in the United Arab Emirates as their Lead Child Protection Specialist. She is passionate about enhancing the lives of children and supporting parents in their role.

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