

## **CMAAO Delhi Resolution on the Prevention of Child Abuse**

Adopted by the 28<sup>th</sup> CMAAO General Assembly, New Delhi, India, September 14, 2013

CMAAO (Confederation of Medical Associations in Asia and Oceania), an organization consisting of 18 National Medical Associations (NMAs) in the Asia and Oceania region, is aware that children, as any other individual, have the right to be protected and respected and to be provided with the basic elements necessary in enjoying a healthy and happy life. Based on its awareness of the medical field's responsibility to prevent child abuse, CMAAO hereby adopts the following principles and encourages individual physicians, NMAs, national governments and related organizations to practice them.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defined 'child Abuse' as a violation of basic human rights of a child, constituting all forms of physical, emotional ill treatment, sexual harm, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual harm or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of relationship of responsibility, trust or power. 'Child Neglect' is stated to occur when there is failure of a parent/guardian to provide for the development of the child, when a parent/guardian is in a position to do so where resources are available to the family or care giver. Mostly neglect occurs in one or more area such as health, education, emotional development, nutrition and shelter. All types of violence and cruelty could be detrimental to the health and normal development of children. The physical and mental damage from child abuse can impact the child in multiple ways throughout his/her life, which raises the importance of multi-agency and multi-disciplinary prevention.

Medical professionals stand on the very front lines of early detection and treatment of child abuse and have exerted great efforts over the past decades to its prevention. While meaningful progress has been made in raising the awareness on this issue among medical professionals and the general public, unfortunately, child abuse has not been reduced. The existence of various forms of child abuse such as oppression and exploitation depending on local culture and sentiment makes a comprehensive response difficult. In addition, social development and the resulting unraveling of family bonds have led to the increase of child abuse in the form of neglect. Accordingly, prevention of child abuse and the early detection and treatment of victims are still imperative social challenges.

International organizations have also established many policies for prevention of child abuse. The UN committee on the Rights of the Child proclaims children to be free from all forms of violence. The World Medical Association (WMA), the umbrella organization of NMAs, in its WMA statement on Child Abuse and Neglect, calls for the world's physicians to be aware of their responsibility in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and for each NMA to raise the awareness of physicians and to provide necessary training and to closely cooperate with governments and related organizations.

Although protecting children from abuse is everybody's responsibility, the following recommendations are made to include multi-agency colleagues.

#### **A. Recommendation to all individual physicians and health providers**

1. When suspecting child abuse, the health practitioners and providers can intervene in the early prevention of abuse by notifying the facts to the appropriate authorities and social organizations and by providing direct support or information to the patient and the family.
2. The physician, who is in the position to perform a unique and special role in identifying and assisting abused children and their parents/care givers, must be aware of his/her responsibility regarding this issue; fulfill his/her duty to report cases of abuse and receive training necessary in identifying child abuse.
3. Also, the doctor/medical professionals and health workers must carefully observe the overall surroundings of the child suspected to be abused and consider the possibility of additional abuse victims because child abuse can occur not just in the family but under various circumstances such as child care facilities, kindergartens and schools.
4. Child abuse usually can be attributed to a combination of causes and requires a combination of multiple approaches to identify and respond to. Therefore, multi-disciplinary collaboration across fields such as medicine, nursing, law and social welfare is required to provide appropriate help to the victim and the family. CMAAO encourages physicians to collaborate with experts of various fields to address the issue of child abuse.

#### **B. Recommendation to NMAs**

1. NMAs must conduct active public campaigns to raise the awareness of child abuse prevention among doctors, health workers, other services and all other sectors of society. They must also cooperate with other groups that conduct such projects to raise the overall social awareness for child protection.
2. NMAs should recommend to the medical credential authorities of their countries to

advocate necessary changes in curriculum and are encouraged to play an active role in promotional activities and the development, teaching, training and practices of medical/allied professional's bodies. In particular, NMAs must develop and conduct Continuing Medical Education (CME) programs that provide basic knowledge on child abuse and protection. The CME programs must include contents such as identification of the abused child, consulting the family and other care givers, medical evaluation, treatment and systematic protection of the abused child as well as knowledge and techniques for record keeping in all cases.

3. NMAs are encouraged to advocate and actively promote and participate to provide necessary advice as an expert group in legislation and public policies to address all aspects of child abuse including measures necessary in its anticipation, detection, confirmation, treatment, protection and rehabilitation to safeguard against repeated victimization.
4. NMAs must cooperate with the government and related authorities in preparing systematic measures to protect health professionals so that they can actively fulfill their direct duty of reporting cases of child abuse and of solving child abuse issues without being treated unfavorably or being exposed to various dangers due to such actions.

### **C. Recommendation to Governments**

1. Each government must provide a basic framework to protect children from all forms of abuse. This includes regulations and legislation on reporting systems, treatment, protection and prevention of repeated abuse of the child. Each government must establish and operate a national child protection register and annually monitor and update this framework.
2. To provide appropriate assistance to the abused child, parents and all entrusted care givers in all settings, each government must create a system for collaboration of all agencies involved with or affecting children. It must also guarantee full rehabilitation and continuum of care.
3. Each government must continuously monitor and research international standards or conventions related with child protection and child abuse prevention and must maintain its national standards and systems in accordance with international and human rights standards through ratification of such if necessary.
4. Each government must have dedicated budgets allocated for child protection services.
5. Each government must have mandatory training of all personnel at all levels.
6. All governments should ensure that there are robust communication systems for timely

referral and intervention across all sectors.

#### **D. Recommendation to other professional bodies and organizations**

1. CMAAO should work with other organizations to gain wide support and participation of the general public for the cause of preventing child abuse by conducting campaigns to raise the overall social awareness on children's rights as well as the organizational responsibility to protect the child from various dangers and threats.
2. All people working in child care sector must work together for better detection, continuous data collection and monitoring of child abuse in collaboration with the community. They must also monitor the government's child abuse prevention policies and initiatives and present opportunities for improvement.
3. They must focus on the development and wide use of education programs and guidelines for children, parents, children related professionals such as teachers and care providers and the general public.
4. They must form a network with related entities such as the government, various expert groups and child protection centers and agencies to exert efforts in sharing data cooperatively.

The 28<sup>th</sup> CMAAO General Assembly (September 12-14, 2013, New Delhi, India), hereby adopts this resolution and, pledges to exert every effort in collectively implementing the principles set forth in this resolution. It calls upon all National Medical Associations to adopt and carry out a work plan and regularly report its implementation status.