

# Child abuse and Dental Implications: A Current Void in Dental Practice

Parul, Sonali Baghla, Samiksha Arora, Snehalata Roy,  
Shazina Saeed, Mehak Segan and Rajiv Janardanan

Amity Institute of Public Health, Amity University, Noida, U.P

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**Abstract**—*The United States federal Child abuse Prevention and Treatment Act defines child abuse and neglect as, at minimum, “any recent act or a failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation.*

*In a research done by M. Costacurta et al, 2016 it was mentioned that WHO has estimated that nearly 57,000 children under 15 years old are dead because of child abuse. Under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POSCO) act the number of cases registered for child abuse raised from 8,904 in 2014 to 14,913 in 2015 in all regions of India.*

*Oral and dental manifestations are seen as physical, sexual and neglect. Studies have shown that oral and facial trauma occur in about 50% of physically abused children. Oral cavity may be a central focus for physically and sexual abuse. This includes bruising, abrasion, laceration of the tongue, lips, oral mucosa, hard and soft palate, gingiva, alveolar mucosa, frenum and maxilla and mandibular fractures, ulcer, vesicle with purulent drainage. If present erythema and petechiae, of unknown etiology found on a soft and hard palates junction or on the floor of the mouth, can be seen as an evident of forced oral sex. Dental neglect include early childhood caries, total lack of oral hygiene, untreated dental caries with progression.*

*There is a void in this area although dentists are aware of diagnosis of child abuse, they are hesitant and unaware of appropriate authorities to report. The neglect has far more greater impact on the female child with less educated mothers and belonging to low economic status. There should be modification in dental school training which should focus on educational and practical experience regarding child abuse to strengthen their capability to care and protect children.*