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**The Burden of Proof: The Importance of Child Abuse Pediatricians within a Multidisciplinary Team Evaluating Alleged Child Abuse and Neglect Cases**

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Background:  
The efficacy of child abuse pediatricians within multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) regarding child sexual abuse has been studied in previous literature; however, child maltreatment as a whole has received little such attention.

Methods:  
The study retrospectively reviewed the legal outcomes of 478 confirmed child abuse cases collected from all children evaluated in 2013-2015 at the Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC) in Tulsa, OK (N=1705). Medical data from OU-Tulsa’s electronic medical record was coupled with records from the Tulsa District Attorney’s Office and the Oklahoma State Courts Network (OSCN) website to study court outcomes of all child maltreatment types.

Results:  
Data analysis yielded 115 unique court cases with 153 defendants, and 151 victims (31.6%). A total of 289 charges were filed resulting in 190 convictions (65.74%). Charges consisted of 50 unique types with most falling under Child Physical Abuse (28.37%), Child Neglect (21.11%), and Child Sexual Abuse (26.64%). Sentencing outcomes varied for defendants; 65 received jail time (mean, including life sentences: 17.13 years+19.94), and 92 received probation (mean: 5.07 years+3.74).

Conclusion:  
Our results show that the majority of suspected child maltreatment cases seen by the child abuse pediatricians at the Tulsa CAC do not result in court outcomes. Those that do are unlikely to result in jail time. Alternative outcomes include probation, or court mandated rehabilitation programs. These findings highlight the importance of child abuse pediatricians in MDTs to discern between true and false medical findings when accusations of abuse arise.