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Concept paper

Necessity of a guideline for the management of foster care children: Medico-legal perspective

Gunethilake KMTB¹, Vidanapathirana M²

¹Consultant Judicial Medical Officer, Provincial General Hospital, Ratnapura, ² Senior Lecturer, Department of Forensic Medicine, Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura

Corresponding author: Vidanapathirana M, Email: mudithavidana@sjp.ac.lk, Tel: 0094772988227

Abstract

Introduction:

According to the UNICEF's Convention on the Rights of the Children (CRC) recognizes children's right to the highest attainable standard of health and access to health care services. In Sri Lanka, there are 414 children homes, and 2479 children are receiving foster care. However, it is found that they are at risk of developing physical, mental and developmental problems. The children in foster care homes suffer secondary victimization and may end up dying. Therefore, the forensic pathologists have to play a major role in the medico-legal management, make legal recommendations and advice regarding future prevention. To understand the local problem, 16 deaths occurred since 2001 at one foster care home are also discussed.

Objectives

To identify the consequences due to lack of care at foster care homes and make suggestions to develop a better system to address the problems.

Discussion

American Academy of Pediatricians developed guidelines for the management of foster care children of USA. But in Sri Lanka, we do not have such guidelines. When the causes of deaths are considered, many are preventable, if identified early and treated properly. Lack of staff, lack of trained staff and lack of recourses may lead to unwanted deaths. Therefore, it is mandatory to identify and evaluate the problems of the children early through multidisciplinary team approach.