

Editorial

The Truth Behind Shaken Baby Syndrome

Professor Alan B. Clemetson (Emeritus, University School of Medicine, Tulane University, New Orleans), was the other professor at the University of Saskatchewan Medical School who was interested in vitamins, especially vitamin C. After he left the university, his interest in this vitamin expanded, culminating in his excellent three volumes on Vitamin C.¹ He has also shared his knowledge about C with us in two papers^{2,3}. In his present report (p. 193) he brings to our attention a very important phenomenon which may be responsible for sending people to prison for having shaken their babies when, in fact, the baby was suffering from scurvy.

I first became interested in this problem when I read the important book by A. Kalokerinos, *Every Second Child*⁴. Dr. Kalokerinos was faced with what appeared to be an unsolvable problem: Among the aboriginal population who were in his care, every second infant died. He observed that the death rate increased following vaccination of these infants. Indeed, death was so common that the aboriginal families did not name their babies until they reached two years of age. Dr. Kalokerinos discovered that these infants were dying from malnutrition, the major manifestation of which was scurvy. When mothers were instructed about proper feeding and with the addition of vitamin C, the death rate dropped to about 5%, from the earlier 50%.

Scurvy is relatively uncommon but it does occur. In one Canadian hospital, a long-term patient developed scurvy while she was in hospital. It is rare enough that physicians are not familiar with its manifestations; if an infant were to develop scurvy most physicians would not consider scurvy as part of the differential diagnosis. Dr. Kalokerinos described one such infant whose mother was found guilty of battering him because of extensive bleeding. As a result of Dr. Kalokerinos' work and his evidence in court, the mother was freed.

We're certain you'll find this important report by Professor Clemetson of interest.

- A. Hoffer, M.D., Ph.D.(FRCP)c

References

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3. Clemetson CA: Vaccinations, inoculations and ascorbic acid. *J Orthomol Med.* 1999; 14(3):137-142.
4. Kalokerinos A. *Every Second Child*. Thomas Nelson Ltd. Sydney, Australia 1974.