

# Abused Children Need Help From People Outside Family

By Catherine Macek  
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Special To The Post

Durham - Abused children, who suffer psychological as well as physical trauma, need a great deal of help from people outside the family. At Duke University Medical Center such support is provided in part by the Child Protection Team (CPT).

The CPT, consisting of Duke physicians, nurses, a physician's associate and a social worker, is a group of

medical professionals that acts as an advocate for abused children.

"The group meets regularly to discuss possible and confirmed abuse cases of children seen or hospitalized at Duke," said team member Dr. Peter English, an assistant professor of pediatrics. "Our primary roles are to help supervise

medical treatment of the abused child and to serve as a medical advisor to Durham County's Depart-

ment of Social Services (DDS), which handles abuse cases as part of their child protective agency."

After reviewing information from all physicians who treated the child, the team provides the DSS with a consensus of the child's physical injuries. Such medical information is needed as proof of abuse.

"In the past the DSS social workers had to be sleuths and check with each doctor involved with the case," English pointed out. "Often a number of physicians were involved

with the diagnosis and treatment of these children, and it was difficult for social workers to correctly interpret the vast quantity of medical information."

A variety of sources alert the CPT about possible cases of child abuse, including emergency room personnel, Duke physicians and inpatient pediatrics staff. "These children often are easy to identify, especially if they have been hospitalized with certain injuries of suspicious origin," English said. "But

through the DSS we also receive referrals from primary care physicians or teachers who are required by law to report suspected child abuse cases. Neighbors, family members or even the abused child also can notify the DSS.

"In addition, Duke pediatricians who see these children for other medical reasons in our outpatient clinics sometimes notice unusual bruises or burns and inform us."

THE CPT, which provides its services without charge, evaluates around

100 cases a year. About 25 percent of the cases involve sexual abuse. "This percentage is high compared to published statistics, but we see some of the most severely abused children at Duke," English said.

Although North Carolina's DSS receives about 25,000 reports of child abuse each year, this probably is only the tip of the iceberg, English said. "Even with mandatory reporting laws, people often don't want to get involved. And, of course, it's the child who suffers."



Dr. William H. Greene, president of Livingstone College, is pictured receiving a plaque from Dr. Pill Cho, chairman of the college's Social Welfare Department. Dr. Cho received the plaque on behalf of the college during the Association for Gerontological Human Development meeting in Philadelphia, PA. Dr. Lennie Marie Tolliver, United States Commissioner on Aging, made the presentation and cited Livingstone as a "role model" for other historically black colleges that are seeking to improve their capabilities in serving the minority aged. The Livingstone College Social Welfare and Sociology Gerontology Certificate Program, along with the Northwest Piedmont Area on Aging, recently sponsored a conference which explored the linkages between education and practice in dealing with the elderly in North Carolina and Dr. Tolliver served as keynote speaker.

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