

# Education for Healthcare Professionals on Screening for Child Abuse



Taya McCarthy & Anna Russell  
Carroll College Nursing Department

## Question

- In healthcare professionals, does confidence in screening for child abuse increase after an educational program compared to before an educational program?



<https://www.oklahoman.com/story/opinion/2022/04/08/child-abuse-prevention-can-prevent-cycle-pain-oklahoma-victims/7271120001/>

## Background

- Child abuse and maltreatment affect approximately 1 in 7 children across the United States, which according to the CDC is likely an underestimate (CDC, 2021).
- Child maltreatment can include physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, as well as neglect.
- Insufficient knowledge of injuries consistent with abuse, lack of standardized screening protocols, and impaired confidence in administering screening tools lead to healthcare providers simply not performing a screening.
- According to the Journal of Emergency Nursing, “if abuse goes undetected at the initial presentation, the abused child has a 35% to 50% chance of experiencing recurrent abuse and a 10% to 30% chance of eventual death from that abuse” (Carson, 2018, p. 577).

## Study

## Description

## Results

Implementation of a Comprehensive Program to Improve Child Physical Abuse Screening and Detection in the Emergency Department (Carson, 2018).

**Level IV, correlation study** held a 20-minute educational session for healthcare professionals (HCP) on screening and recognition of child abuse using the Escape Instrument screening tool. The goal was to evaluate test scores based on knowledge and confidence of the HCP before and after education.

The 20-minute educational session for HCPs on the use of the Escape Instrument for screening and recognition of child abuse was determined to be effective. Confidence scores increased from 3.31 before the education to 3.77 after.

A Training Programme for Taiwan Nurses to Improve Child Abuse Reporting (Lee & Chou, 2017).

**Level III, quasi-experimental research study** which had nurses receive a child abuse and neglect training and compared self-efficacy scores before and after.

The Child Abuse and Neglect Training Program for Nurses was shown to be effective with confidence scores increasing from pre-test (6.57) to post-test (8.42). Training increased confidence in screening for and recognizing child abuse.

A Survey on the Perception and Attitude Change of First-Line Healthcare Providers After Child Abuse Education in South Korea: A Pilot Study (Paek et. Al., 2019).

**Level IV, correlation study** examined 3 survey results, one from before and 2 from after educational sessions on healthcare professional’s confidence in screening and recognition of child abuse. Two, two-hour long lectures about screening, reporting, and recognition were given to HCPs at 15 different hospitals in South Korea.

Healthcare professional’s confidence scores significantly increased after the lectures on child abuse. The average confidence score before was 4.76 (out of 10), immediately following the program the score was 7.59, and the average score three months later was 6.6.

Successful E-learning Programme on the Detection of Child Abuse in Emergency Departments: A Randomized Controlled Trial (Smeekens et al., 2011).

**Level II randomized controlled trial** examined whether an e-learning course was effective in increasing confidence in screening for child abuse.

Confidence scores increased significantly in the experimental group who received the e-learning training to aid in child abuse recognition and screening.

## Conclusion

- Overall, education for healthcare professionals is effective in improving recognition and screening for child abuse.
- While the research articles mostly answered the PICO question, further study is needed across more hospitals in order to definitively determine benefits of education related to child abuse screening and recognition.



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<https://www.ymcamidtn.org/health-and-fitness/articles/ymca-promotes-child-protection-during-national-child-abuse-prevention>

## Application to Nursing

- Nurses are mandatory reporters, meaning that if child abuse is suspected, nurses have an ethical and legal obligation to report it.
- It is important that nurses are educated on recognizing and screening for child abuse, as nurses have a significant amount of patient interaction.
- Having confidence to recognize and screen patients for abuse will increase the number of cases detected and screening performed.
- Nurses could advocate for educational programs on child abuse to be implemented for all HCPs by proposing the idea to management.