Child Abuse
Barriers to Reporting
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Introduction
The physical, psychological and social costs of child abuse all create a financial burden on health services. Monetary costs however do not adequately convey the humanitarian concept of child abuse. Nurses often have first contact with abused children yet do not always report their suspicions.

Findings
Barriers to reporting
Education
Nurses often have limited knowledge on child abuse and neglect.
Nurses frequently requested more training on child abuse and neglect.

Experience
Lack of experience decreased recognition and reporting of child abuse and neglect.

Signs and Symptoms
Nurses experienced difficulty recognising signs and symptoms of abuse, especially emotional abuse and neglect.

Perception of Role
Some nurses did not see reporting as their role.

Consequences
Nurses feared for themselves and their families and the consequences to the child if a report was made.

Child Protection Services
Negative opinions of child protection services inhibited reporting.

Documentation
Nurses often did not document suspicions of child abuse and neglect.
Nurses were more likely to report if documented evidence of past patterns of abuse existed.

Social Perceptions
Nurses were concerned about putting their own values on families. A level of denial exists that inhibits reporting.
Nurses feared crossing personal and professional boundaries, especially in small communities.

What can you do?
• Attend Mandatory Training
• Look for Signs and Symptoms
• Document
• Report - Phone 13 14 78
• Maintain your Emotional Wellbeing

Discussion
Nurses have a legal responsibility to report suspicions of child abuse and neglect to the relevant authorities in each state.

Barriers exist that prevent this from happening.

Mandatory training for all nurses may reduce these barriers.
Further research is needed to provide evidence to support the necessity for mandatory training for all nurses.

Implications for Practice
A shared responsibility
Nurses
Attend mandatory training.
Lobby for organization and government involvement.
Promote importance of mandatory training to colleagues to encourage widespread participation.

Organizations
Ensure adequately trained staff.
Ensure all staff are aware of their legal responsibilities.
Have clear policies and procedures.
Support staff through the reporting process.

Government
As a signatory to the ‘Convention of the Rights of the Child’ Australia has agreed to:
“Take all measures available to ensure that children’s rights are respected, protected and fulfilled.”
In most states legal frameworks exist that require nurses to report suspicions of child abuse and neglect. This may need to be incorporated with a structured approach that ensures all nurses are adequately trained to fulfill their role.

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