

Case study - Jacinta

Background	<p>Jacinta who is seven years old, has been to see her GP 15 times over the last month. Her father says that she constantly vomits and she is steadily losing weight. The GP has given Jacinta a range of medication but nothing seems to be working. According to the father she vomits two to three times per day. When the GP talks to Jacinta about her symptoms, her father always answers for her.</p> <p>On this occasion the GP is concerned about Jacinta's health and refers her to the hospital. The doctors assess her condition and admit her to a ward. Over the next week she steadily gains weight, doesn't vomit at all and is allowed home.</p> <p>Three days after being discharged from hospital, Jacinta visits the GP. Her Father tells the GP that the vomiting and weight loss have started again.</p>
What type(s) of abuse may have taken place?	
What are the factors that indicate this?	
What actions might be taken?	
By whom might these actions be taken?	
Comment	

Case study – Suggested response

Background	<p>Jacinta who is seven years old, has been to see her GP 15 times over the last month. Her father says that she constantly vomits and she is steadily losing weight. The GP has given Jacinta a range of medication but nothing seems to be working. According to the Father she vomits two to three times per day. When the GP talks to Jacinta about her symptoms, her father always answers for her.</p> <p>On this occasion the GP is concerned about Jacinta's health and refers her to the hospital. The doctors assess her condition and admit her to a ward. Over the next week she steadily gains weight, doesn't vomit at all and is allowed home.</p> <p>Three days after being discharged from hospital, Jacinta visits the GP. Her Father tells the GP that the vomiting and weight loss have started again.</p>
What type(s) of abuse may have taken place?	Factitious illness (formerly known as Munchausen's Syndrome by proxy). This is a form of physical abuse.
	Emotional abuse. Physical abuse if Father is giving Jacinta something to make her vomit. For example, poisoning.
What are the factors that indicate this?	Vomiting and weight loss that quickly clear up on admittance to hospital. Father not allowing Jacinta to speak during visits to the GP.
What actions might be taken?	Medical assessment. Referral to social services. Possible referral to police. Possible referral of father to a psychiatrist for psychological/mental health issues.
By whom might these actions be taken?	GP.

<p>Comment</p>	<p>Factitious illness is where an adult purposely makes a child ill to gain attention for themselves. This is often a sign of a mental health issue.</p> <p>It is possible that the father spoke for Jacinta in the GP surgery so she could not tell the GP how she actually felt.</p> <p>The father may be giving Jacinta something to make her ill, when she is given medical treatment and she is no longer being made ill, the illness clears up very quickly.</p> <p>Jacinta may be worried as she does not know that she is being given something that is making her ill. She may think that she is or is being told that she is seriously ill.</p> <p>Children who have a factitious illness usually recover very quickly when given medical treatment and medical teams may find no reasons as to why the child was ill.</p>
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