

Child abuse and neglect in paediatric burns: The majority is caused by neglect and thus preventable

Marie-Louise H.J. Loos^a, Annebeth Meij-de Vries^b, Michelle Nagtegaal^c, Roel Bakx^a

^a Department of Paediatric Surgery, Emma Children's Hospital, Amsterdam UMC, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

^b Department of Surgery, Red Cross Hospital, Burn Center Beverwijk, Beverwijk, the Netherlands

^c Department of Social Paediatrics, Emma Children's Hospital, Amsterdam UMC, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Aim

Investigate the incidence and associated characteristics of negligent burns among children treated at a Dutch burn center.

Methods

- **Retrospective cohort** study of all children (0 - 18 years old) with burns treated between **January 2013 - December 2015**
- Neglect: unsafe environment or insufficient supervision
- Non-accidental burns were diagnosed by Child Abuse and Neglect-team or Expert panel

Results

- N= 330
 - 56% burns due to neglect
 - 42% burns due to an accident
 - 2% inflicted burns
- Neglect was significantly associated with:
 - Hot beverages
 - Young age
 - Occurrence at home
 - Located at anterior trunk and neck

Discussion

- Most negligent burns occurred due to an underestimation of the danger of the circumstances in combination with an overestimation of the capabilities of the child.
- Neglect is challenging to assess, because of varying circumstances from "transient neglect in an otherwise harmonious family to repeated and more deliberate neglect".

Neglect is a major cause of burns in young children and thus preventable.

Awareness and educational programs should focus on neglect as cause of burns in children and especially aimed at households.

