

## EDITORIAL / УВОДНИК

# Homo homini lupus est

Slobodan Nikolić

Institute of Forensic Medicine "Milovan Milovanović", Belgrade, Serbia;  
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Medicine, Belgrade, Serbia

Man's inhumanity to man of all kinds has been well documented throughout each era of recorded time [1]. Modern era and time of transition we live in brought with it new ways of inhumanity. In these times, living in Serbia, we are exposed to many kinds of violence. Acts of violence may originate from the state authorities via legislation aimed against particular groups, or from single perpetrators using intimidation, physical assault, or mobbing [2]. Some vulnerable social groups are particularly exposed to violence and they need special legal protection.

Ambrose Auguste Tardieu provided the first description of *child abuse* in contemporary medical literature when he reported 32 cases of cruelty to children in 1860. With specific reference to abusive head injuries to children, John Caffey in 1946 described six infants with multiple fractures in the long bones, who additionally had chronic subdural hematoma and no history of injury [2]. Child abuse is non-random physical and/or mental damage inflicted on a child, either willfully or through neglect, within the family or institutions, which causes injury and/or impaired development and which, in individual cases, may cause death [3]. The boundary between acceptable violence in the context of the so-called necessary educational measures by parents or as part of accepted tradition, and unacceptable violence leading to death or severe injury is not always clear [3]. Although the term *battered child* is often used to describe physical child abuse, the recent literature refers to *non-accidental injury* and *abusive* or *inflicted injury* [3]. There are many factors to consider when trying to distinguish accidental from non-accidental injury. Clinical findings and radiologic imaging studies not in keeping with the history and injuries of different ages are key indicators of inflicted trauma, especially in infants. The age and stage of development of the child, the timeliness of seeking treatment, other injuries of different ages, child's state of nutrition and cleanliness should be taken into consideration when separating inflicted from non-inflicted injuries [4].

Handicapped children are in particular danger [2]. Another factor that influences recognition of abusive injuries includes a physician's experience with child abuse and family violence [1].

The terms *intimate partner violence*, *intimate partner abuse* or *domestic abuse* describe physical, sexual or psychological harm originating from a current or former intimate partner or spouse and may happen among heterosexual and same-sex couples [2]. *Stalking* and nowadays *cyber-stalking* are often included among different types of intimate partner violence [2]. Older abused women face additional challenges, having grown up and married during a time when domestic abuse was tolerated or ignored, having lived with abuse for many years, which can lead to problems such as poor self-esteem, feeling the duty to take care of an ageing partner, or feeling afraid of living alone after being with someone for many years [2].

But we mustn't forget *school violence*: *school bullying* is primarily used to describe repeated harassment behavior in schools, and a new type of violent behavior among schoolchildren – *cyber mobbing* using mobile telephones, computers, the internet, and social networks such as Facebook [2]. Or *violence against homosexuals*, which originates from the state authorities through legislation or from single perpetrators tolerated by state authorities. Or *violence against the patients in mental hospitals*, which originates from the medical staff, in cases when monitoring of personnel in these institutions is poor. Or *violence against the elderly* as domestic violence or violence in nursing centers – including physical, sexual and psychological abuse, neglect, as well as financial exploitation and violation of civil rights [2].

In hurrying to catch up with the European Union, we have adopted modern European legislation easily, but we do not enforce these new laws consistently – now there is a great gap between reality and copied European legal norms.

There is a German saying: *Ohne Daten, keine Taten*. To act, one needs facts. The very first and key step in protection against violence is recognition of its existence in society, and after



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Correspondence to:

Slobodan NIKOLIĆ  
Institute of Forensic Medicine  
"Milovan Milovanović", Belgrade,  
Serbia;  
Faculty of Medicine, University of  
Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia  
[slobodan.nikolic@med.bg.ac.rs](mailto:slobodan.nikolic@med.bg.ac.rs)

that diagnosis, which rests upon multidisciplinary efforts among clinicians, social workers, medicolegal death investigators and law enforcement agencies [2, 5, 6]. Collaborative efforts and funding by governmental and private sources support ongoing research to establish evidence-based markers for accurate diagnosis [2]. Finally, the last steps are protection of the abused persons, adequate pun-

ishment of perpetrators, and continuing education and prevention.

Sensationalistic headlines in tabloids are not the way to solve these social and medical problems. Each of us could be abused at a certain time in life. We need true action by the government and the virtuous political authority. We need deeds.

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