

Abuse and trauma

7.8v11 6/11/00

The number of infants who sustain head trauma at the hands of an adult may be higher than earlier estimates suggest, British researchers report.

Their study found that in Scotland, nearly 25 in every 100,000 children younger than one year sustained a non-accidental head injury between 1998 and 1999. It was previously estimated that about 11 of every 100,000 children younger than one year sustained these injuries, known as non-accidental head injuries, according to a report in the November 4th issue of *The Lancet*.

Such head injuries can cause brain trauma, including internal bleeding and hemorrhages in the eye. These injuries are often caused by shaking a young child or by compressing or

hitting the head.

In their study, Drs Karen M. Barlow and Robert A. Minns from the Royal Hospital for Sick Children in Edinburgh, Scotland, found that these injuries occur mostly in children who are just over two months old and appear to be more common in urban areas. They frequently occur during the autumn and winter months, the authors note. More than three quarters of babies who survive these injuries are left with long-term neurological and developmental problems, the report indicates.

Barlow and Minns write that their findings can inform legislation aimed at protecting children, and help to evaluate the effectiveness of educational efforts to prevent shaken baby syndrome. - Reuters