**Implications of Types of Forensic Evidence in Child Sexual Abuse Cases**

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**INTRODUCTION**

- Child sexual abuse (CSA) cases have various types of forensic evidence that is compelling to juries.
- Attorneys can use forensic evidence to enhance jurors’ tendency to believe the defendant or the victim.
- Types of forensic evidence used can significantly impact juror judgments or can create more controversy.
- Types of forensic evidence:
  - Child testimony
  - Expert testimony
  - Medical evidence
  - Syndromal evidence
  - Assessment with anatomically detailed dolls

- CSA cases account for 88% of instances of child testimony (Goodman et al., 1999).

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**TYPES OF FORENSIC EVIDENCE**

**Evidence**

**Child Testimony**

- Common interview strategies may use problematic techniques such as leading questions and can induce false memories (Goodman et al., 1999).
- The defense will challenge child testimony by arguing inaccurate memory, coaching, and suggestibility (Goodman et al., 1999).

**Expert Testimony**

- Used on behalf of the victim (Klettke et al., 2010).
- Typically, the expert is a psychologist who has knowledge, skill, and training in the area of CSA (Klettke et al., 2010).
- Helpful in describing behaviors and responses of a child who experienced CSA.

**Assessment With Anatomically Detailed Dolls**

- In a session with a forensic psychologist, the child would use the doll to describe the abuse (Kovera et al., 1994).
- Increasing laypeople’s knowledge helps in reaching a verdict, and also allows jurors to make better-informed decisions (Bruck et al., 2011).

**Medical Evidence**

- When medical evidence was present, victims were judged more truthful and there was greater belief that the defendant was guilty (Falligant et al., 2017).
- Other research found that medical evidence did not predict verdicts (Lewis et al., 2014).

**Syndromal Evidence**

- Based on emotional and behavioral reactions to sexual abuse (Kovera et al., 1994).
- Research suggests that this is the most effective evidence used in cross-examination (Kovera et al., 1994).
- Testimony describes the ways in which the victim shows syndrome or disorder symptoms commonly experienced by CSA victims.

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**RESEARCH RESULTS**

- Child’s age and interview quality can affect testimony (Bruck et al., 2011; Holcomb & Jacquin, 2007).
- Preschoolers and young children are prone to suggestibility and may be less believable (Bruck et al., 2011).
- Details of CSA are hard for children to correlate with specific events in cases of repeated abuse (Brubacher et al., 2014).
- When interviewers talk about two occurrences of abuse, often times the child cannot remember (Brubacher et al., 2014).

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**REFERENCES**


