Parental Alienation Syndrome: prevention of paediatrician's unconscious contribution

• Ursula Kodjoe

Abstract

Parental Alienation Syndrome refers to a disturbance whose primary manifestation is a child’s unjustified campaign of denigration against, or rejection of one parent due to the influence of the other parent combined with the child’s own contributions. The rejection is unjustified and no reasonable response to the behaviour of the alienated parent's behaviour and to the formerly loving relationship between parent and child. The alienation and loss of contact between the target parent and the child occurs during parental separation and divorce with one parent denying access to the other parent often with the (unconscious) support of judicial, medical and social institutions.

The manipulation of children against one parent is widely regarded as emotional abuse and parental exploitation of the child (Clawar & Rivlin, Kopetski, Kelly & Johnston).

It is of crucial importance for paediatricians to evaluate the child’s family situation being caught in the middle of high conflict between parents about custody and visitation rights.

The primary caretaking parents often approach their paediatrician reporting the child’s reaction after visiting the other parent: they do not see the behaviour as a normal farewell reaction, they seek to enter into an alliance with the paediatrician and ask for attestations against further contacts with the other parent. Unfortunately too many paediatricians issue those papers and thus contribute to the loss of contact between a formerly loving and beloved parent.

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