

## Community seminar

### MEDICAL EVIDENCE IN THE LEGAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

#### DEFENDING PARENTS - MUNCHAUSEN BY PROXY AND SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME

A medical sociologist/anthropologist and a lawyer are conducting a community seminar concerning shaken baby syndrome and Munchausen syndrome by proxy (medical child abuse) and their intersection with child protection, family law, domestic violence and criminal law.

Michael Nott, lawyer, will address how shaken baby syndrome and Munchausen syndrome by proxy (MSBP) are used in child protection, family law and criminal law jurisdictions. The validity of these theories and concomitant medical evidence has come under scrutiny, with an increase in acquittals in the US, UK and Sweden.

Dr Helen Hayward-Brown will address the manner in which parents may be at risk of profiling in these allegations and identify common hospital medical errors blamed on mothers. Mothers who accuse ex-partners of physical, sexual or other abuse in the family law courts are increasingly finding themselves accused of Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy as a retaliatory measure.

**Community members are invited to the seminar to be held in the Joy Anderson Room at 5.00 pm on Tuesday, 17 July 2018 at the Lawson Mid-Mountains Community Centre, 7 New Street, Lawson and at 5.00 pm on Wednesday, 25 July 2018 at the Kensington Park Community Centre, 1 Day Lane, Kensington NSW 2033.**

Dr Helen Hayward-Brown is a medical sociologist/anthropologist with doctoral and post-doctoral expertise in false allegations of Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy (medical child abuse), in addition to over 20 years' experience consulting with parents, lawyers, politicians and doctors in Australia, the UK, the US, New Zealand, Germany and The Netherlands.

Lawyer, Michael Nott, practises in the child protection, criminal and family law jurisdictions, with a specific emphasis on medical and scientific evidence, including how it relates to shaken baby syndrome and Munchausen syndrome by proxy.

Mr Nott offers a consultancy for other lawyers on legal defence strategies to be used in child abuse medical matters as the adverse medical evidence should not go unchallenged. In many medical cases there is a reliance on a flawed circular path of reasoning, where the factual foundation and assumptions for expert opinion alleging abuse have not been established.<sup>1</sup> Allegations of abuse often occur when wrongly interpreted medical findings establish trauma and/or wrongful actions where no such action exists. In medical cases such as these, abuse allegations are unsupported by an identifiable process of reasoning.<sup>2</sup>

Dr Hayward-Brown and Mr Nott are independent and do not work for any child protection agency or State body.

#### Contacts:

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<sup>1</sup> *Dasreef Pty Ltd v Hawchar* (2011) 243 CLR 588 at [69]; *Makita (Australia) Pty Ltd v Sprowles* (2001) NSWLR 705 at [85]; *R v Ping* [2006] Qd R 69 at [43]-[46].

<sup>2</sup> *Dasreef Pty Ltd v Hawchar* at [42], per French CJ, Gummow, Hayne, Crennan, Kiefel and Bell JJ; [91]-[94], per Heydon J; *Makita (Australia) Pty Ltd v Sprowles* at [85].

Dr Hayward-Brown's contact details for information concerning MSBP.  
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Mr Michael Nott's website and articles he has written in these matters.  
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