

# Ensuring that Hospitals Adequately Screen for Child Abuse Injuries

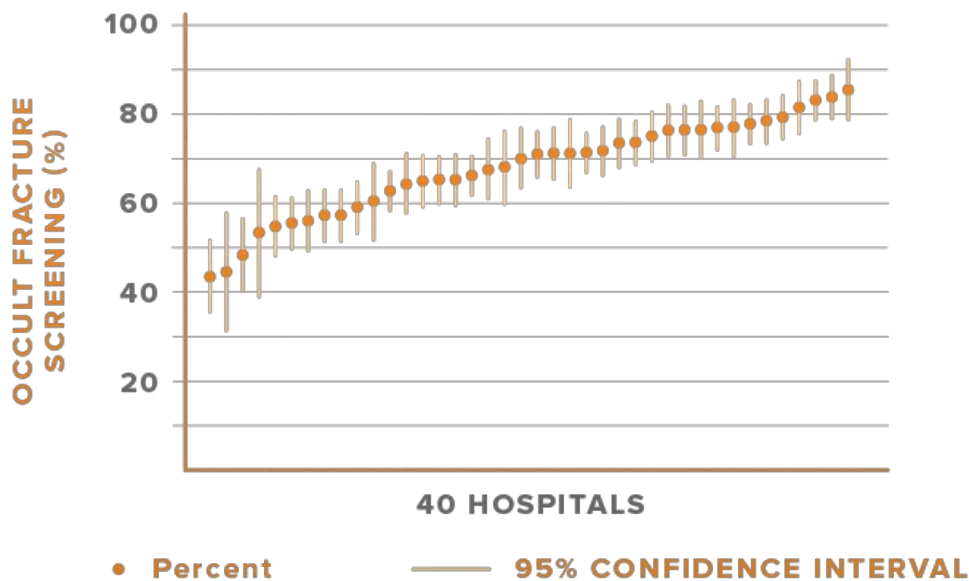
## Statement of Problem

Every year, more than 120,000 children are confirmed victims of physical abuse in the United States, but the true incidence is likely higher. A major challenge in diagnosing abuse in young children is the fact that many abuse injuries are only discovered via screening imaging, such as X-rays. These type of “hidden injuries,” which could be cracked ribs or brain injury that are only revealed by screening imaging, are called “occult injuries.” Research has shown that the decision to screen is heavily influenced by the socioeconomic and racial background of families and that different hospital systems vary greatly in how often they screen for these occult injuries. This can lead to certain children being over-screened and others under-screened on the basis of social, cultural and socioeconomic factors. A lack of clear criteria on the appropriate use of occult injury screening has hindered efforts to address these disparities and improve the quality of care.

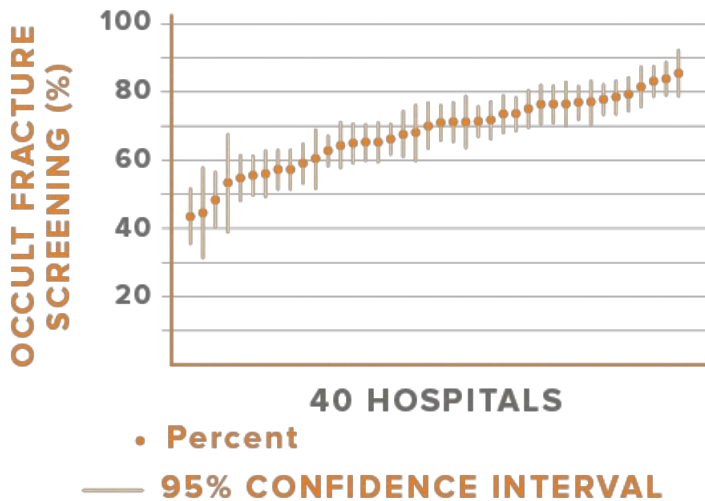
## Description

### Ensuring Hospitals Adequately Screen for Child Abuse

Image



Image



**Adherence to guidelines** for screening for occult fractures in young children diagnosed with physical abuse **varied substantially** among the 40 pediatric institutions in this study.

This project aims to 1) develop and validate screening guidelines for performing occult injury screening in young injured children, 2) develop a quality metric for assessing how well hospitals screen for occult injuries using administrative data, 3) apply this new algorithm to a large database of pediatric hospitals, and 4) identify factors that promote appropriate use, overuse, and underuse of occult injury screening.

## Next Steps

Dr. Wood intends to strengthen the way hospitals measure performance for occult injury screening. By standardizing the approach to screening, she intends to reduce inequities in screening across institutions.

*This project page was last updated in May 2019.*

## Suggested Citation

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, PolicyLab. *Ensuring that Hospitals Adequately Screen for Child Abuse Injuries* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.policylab.chop.edu> [Accessed: plug in date accessed here].

## PolicyLab Leads



[Joanne Wood](#)  
MD, MSHP

## Team

Chris Feudtner

Russell Localio

## Funders of Project

Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health & Human Development

## Related Tools & Publications

- [Subdural Hemorrhage in Pediatric Patients with Enlargement of the Subarachnoid Spaces](#)  
[Article](#)  
Apr 2013
- [Variation in Occult Injury Screening for Children with Suspected Abuse in Selected U.S. Children's Hospitals](#)  
[Article](#)  
Nov 2012
- [Influence of age and fall type on head injuries in infants and toddlers](#)  
[Article](#)  
May 2012
- [Evaluation and referral for child maltreatment in pediatric poisoning victims](#)  
[Article](#)  
Apr 2012
- [Vitamin D Status in Abused and Nonabused Children Younger Than 2 years Old with Fractures](#)  
[Article](#)  
May 2011
- [Disparities in the evaluation and diagnosis of abuse among infants with traumatic brain injury](#)  
[Article](#)  
Sep 2010
- [Skeletal Surveys in Infants with Isolated Skull Fractures](#)  
[Article](#)  
Feb 2009
- [Distinguishing inflicted versus accidental abdominal injuries in young children](#)  
[Article](#)  
Nov 2005
- [Development of Hospital-Based Guidelines for Skeletal Survey in Young Children with Bruises](#)  
[Article](#)  
Jan 2015
- [Evaluation for Occult Fractures in Injured Children](#)  
[Article](#)  
Jul 2015
- [Association of Pediatric Abusive Head Trauma Rates With Macroeconomic Indicators](#)  
[Article](#)  
Jul 2015
- [Testing for Abuse in Children with Sentinel Injuries](#)  
[Article](#)

Oct 2015

- [Challenges in Prevention of Abusive Head Trauma](#)  
[Article](#)  
Oct 2015
- [Development of Guidelines for Skeletal Survey in Young Children With Intracranial Hemorrhage](#)  
[Article](#)  
Mar 2016
- [Prevalence of Abuse Among Young Children With Rib Fractures: A Systematic Review](#)  
[Article](#)  
Oct 2016
- [Skeletal Surveys in Young, Injured Children: A Systematic Review](#)  
[Article](#)  
Nov 2017
- [Use and Utility of Skeletal Surveys to Evaluate for Occult Fractures in Young Injured Children](#)  
[Article](#)  
Aug 2018
- [Quality Improvement Initiative to Improve Abuse Screening Among Infants With Extremity Fractures](#)  
[Article](#)  
Dec 2018
- [Advanced Cervical Spine Imaging in Abusive Head Trauma: An Update on Recent Literature and Future Directions](#)  
[Article](#)  
Sep 2018
- [Impact of Child Abuse Clinical Pathways on Skeletal Survey Performance in High-risk Infants](#)  
[Article](#)  
Mar 2019
- [Occult Head Injuries in Infants Evaluated for Physical Abuse](#)  
[Article](#)  
Mar 2020
- [Prevalence of Abuse and Additional Injury in Young Children With Rib Fractures as Their Presenting Injury](#)  
[Article](#)  
Mar 2020
- [More Data, More Questions: No Simple Answer About Which Children Should Undergo Screening Neuroimaging for Clinically Occult Abusive Head Trauma](#)  
[Article](#)  
Jun 2020
- [What's in a Name? Sentinel Injuries in Abused Infants](#)  
[Article](#)  
May 2021
- [Evaluation of the Abdomen in the Setting of Suspected Child Abuse](#)  
[Article](#)  
May 2021

- [Brief Resolved Unexplained Events and Child Maltreatment: "A Brief Review of Clinical Overlap and Evaluation"](#)  
[Article](#)  
May 2021
- [Improving Child Physical Abuse Detection & Reducing Disparities Within and Between Hospital Settings Evidence to Action Briefs](#)  
Feb 2022
- [Child Abuse Imaging and Findings in the Time of COVID-19](#)  
[Article](#)  
Feb 2022
- [Applying a Diagnostic Excellence Framework to Assess Opportunities to Improve Recognition of Child Physical Abuse](#)  
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Apr 2023
- [Yield of Postmortem Skeletal Surveys in Infants Presenting to Emergency Care With Sudden and Unexpected Death](#)  
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Aug 2023
- [Validating Use of ICD-10 Diagnosis Codes in Identifying Physical Abuse Among Young Children](#)  
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Mar 2023
- [Yield of Skeletal Surveys in National Network of Child Abuse Pediatricians: Age is Key](#)  
[Article](#)  
Nov 2024
- [Emergency Department Triage Chief Complaints Among Children Evaluated for Physical Abuse Concerns](#)  
[Article](#)  
May 2024

#### Related Projects

[CAPNET: Improving Child Abuse Care and Outcomes Through Multicenter Research Family & Community Health](#)