

Abuse of Human Life

Abuse of human life assaults the dignity of a person as a bearer of the image of God. Human abuse is an offense against God. Abuse may be physical, psychological, or emotional. Furthermore, there is a spiritual dimension to abuse. The resulting harm may be permanent, reparable, or only partially reparable. While not all harm is the result of abuse, abuse results in harm.

Abuse arises from pride, greed, lust, hatred, ignorance, or indifference. Abuse may be intentional or unintentional; it may result from inappropriate acts of commission or omission.¹

General conditions of human abuse may be directed against people in many ways. For example:

- Persecution or genocide of people sharing a common ethnic, political, racial or religious identity.
- Misallocation or maldistribution of resources causing inadequate relief, starvation, or death.
- Human trafficking for purposes of servitude or sexual exploitation, such as prostitution, predation, and pornography.
- Coerced bodily mutilation, e.g. female circumcision, dismemberment.
- Unjust treatment of prisoners.
- Coerced retrieval of gametes, organs, or embryos.
- Child abuse, spousal abuse, elder abuse and other forms of relational abuse.

Individual health care professionals engaged in the care of a person who is in an abusive situation have substantial attendant responsibilities in addition to providing appropriate medical care. They should affirm the victim's worth as a person loved by God. Insofar as possible, they should assist in the reparation of the abusive situation, in the removal of the individual from the situation if there is threat of imminent harm, and in the rehabilitation of the abused individual. This almost always will involve reporting to authorities so that the perpetrator can be dealt with appropriately.

CMDA condemns human abuse. Abuse harms not only the victims but also degrades all humanity. As Christians, we recognize that evil is part of the human condition. We are thankful that God is able to redeem the results of evil to accomplish his glory. He often uses the health care professional in that process.

*Approved by the House of Representatives
Passed Unanimously
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¹ Acts of omission may be acts of neglect. Not all acts of neglect rise to the level of abuse.