Did you know that Shaken Baby Syndrome is now termed Abusive Head Trauma (AHT)?

In 2009, the American Academy of Pediatrics changed the terminology to account for an increased understanding of the mechanisms of this type of trauma, which include:

- Shaking,
- Blunt impact, or a
- Combination of forces.

Infants and young children have relatively large heads with poor neck support and are most prone to head injuries by direct impact or shaking. **Head injuries are the most common cause of death from abuse**, with infants under 1 year being at the highest risk. **Most (80%) deaths from head trauma in children under the age of 2 are a result of abuse.**

**All of the following injuries are consistent with Abusive Head Trauma:**

- Retinal hemorrhages (bleeding in the back of the eyes which is seen in 75% - 90% of cases),
- Posterior rib fractures (rib fractures near the backbone – label B in illustration),
- Subdural hematomas (bleeding underneath the covering of the brain – label A in illustration), and/or
- Brain stem injury (this is the part of the brain that controls heart rate and breathing).

The above clinical findings frequently reveals **little or no evidence of external trauma.** There is often delay in seeking medical care and a common history is that the infant “went to sleep, but didn’t wake-up”.

Confessions from the perpetrators are uncommon; however, one study found that 62.5% of confessions stated they shook the infant in an “extremely violent” manner, and repeatedly (2 to 30 times) because it “stopped the infant’s crying”.2

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3 The Radiology Assistant, Non Accidental Trauma by Simon Robben, Radiology Department of the Maastricht University Hospital in the Netherlands