

Review report for A Probabilistic Analysis of Short Fall Arguments in Legal Cases of Abusive Head Trauma

Jining Qin

February 8, 2016

1 Summary

I was asked to review the introduction section of this report. Abusive head trauma(AHT) is traumatic aftermath on babies resulting from their guardians' abusive action. The diagnosis of AHT is made by excluding all other plausible causes of the head trauma. Short fall is one of the confounding causes that could lead to very similar result. Therefore there are people studying the prevalence of deaths caused by short falls (since it has important use in legal cases). Chadwick et al is the most widely cited one and it has an estimate of the prevalence with its calculation explicitly shown.

2 General comment

This doesn't look quite like a introduction in a paper. I'm not sure whether there is specific format requirement for the paper. The background is introduced but I think readers still have to work on their own to see the main idea of the paper and the importance of the topic. Moreover, the review of past work can be better organized. It is a little bizarre to talk about the Chadwick paper after discussion of all three papers (Chadwick, Plunkett, Moran). Maybe the Chadwick paper is the center of discussion in this paper. In that case, I think you should say it explicitly. Something like "I agree with xx that Chadwick's calculation is generally correct but people who cited it are wrong in blabla" would help readers keep track of the big picture greatly. These are mainly based on Lebrun's discussion on saving reader's energy.

3 Specific comments

First sentence: ... "whether the case involved" should be involves". Also, since the information in the parentheses won't be used much, it might be better off as a footnote. Based on Lebrun's discussion on managing acronyms.

Second sentence: move "according to the US CDC" to the end might help readers grasp the important message more easily. Based on Gopen's discussion about stress positions.

Second sentence of second paragraph: The information in the parentheses is a little confusing. Maybe put it in footnote with some explanation might help. It looks a little like a reference but not quite so. I need a little more clarification. Also, the sentence is a little too long. The end of the sentence should be but isn't touching the real importance of studying short falls. Things like "Death could be due to accidental short falls, so the people accused of abusing the kids to death are innocent." may help. Also, I think it should be "consequent death",

not "consequently". Based on our discussion during the lectures about putting yourself into reader's shoes, especially when motivating the topic.

First sentence of paragraph three: "... do not provide other values " should be "their own estimates of". "Other values" is a very vague expression. This is minor issue and I cannot think of a reference.

Last sentence of paragraph three: this sentence might be better of broken up into two. I'm not sure which reason is "among other reasons" refers to. I think it refers to the content in the parentheses, but it looks bizarre outside the parentheses. First sentence of last paragraph: a little too long. Might be better as "Chadwick did this this and that but no others did. Therefore the paper is very useful in xxx cases." Based on Lebrun's discussion about saving readers' energy.