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Daniel Valerio was born to Cheryl Butcher and Michael Valerio in 1988 at Victoria, Australia (Goddard and Liddell 1995). He was the fourth kid born to Cheryl Butcher but the second to Michael Valerio since they had met when Cheryl had already two kids of her own. About one year later on October 1989, Cheryl and Michael relationship came to an end and they parted ways. On February of the following year Cheryl met Paul Aiton whom she started living together with; that is when Daniel Valerio's horrifying abusive experience began in events that culminated to his death five months later, when he was barely 2 years old (Goddard and Liddell 1995). The purpose of this paper is to discuss the nature of Daniel Valerio child abuse case in general and generate lessons learned from this experience. By the time that Daniel succumbed to his internal injuries that finally led to his death he has been on and off in hospitals a dozen times where he was treated by various health professionals that included pediatrics and general practitioners. The coroner postmortem report performed after his death indicated a total of 104 injuries at every part of the young boy's body (Goddard and Liddell 1995). The coroner report identified the fatal injuries to be on internal organs in the abdomen region, which had been overlooked by the last doctor that was treating Daniel.

It is these internal injuries that led to internal bleeding that finally caused Daniel's death. Other extensive injuries that were identified during the postmortem examination were multiple fractures on the collar bone, head injuries and on the trunk among other areas (Goddard and Liddell 1995). In this case it is obvious that Daniels abusive experience started when Paul Aiton moved into their house, a fact that was collaborated from several

sources including the neighbors who were incidentally the first to notice the signs of abuse.

Over the next five months when Daniel was being continuously abused by Paul, a series of health professionals were involved, numerous calls made to police, teachers informed and child protection officers notified more than once bringing the total number of professionals involved to more than 20 (Saunders and Goddard, 2001). What is baffling in Daniel abuse case is that none of these trained professionals were able to avert Daniel death eventually despite their involvement at various levels. Even more troubling is the fact that the police and the child protection officers would not have identified a similar child abuse case that involved Daniels older brother that was also being carried out by Paul. In the end it was an electrician who identified the typical signs of abuse in Daniel that finally led police to investigate, thereby exposing the weakness and ineffectiveness of the Dual Track System; the child protection system in Victoria at the time (Saunders and Goddard, 2001). More questions would be raised about the competence of the various government professionals that could not obviously identify a typical child abuse case, let alone prevent death from occurring. In a highly publicized trial, Paul Aiton was finally found guilty of murdering Daniel Valerio and was sentenced to 22 years in jail, one month later the Minister for Community Services announced far reaching changes in child protection procedures that involved mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse cases. The significance of Daniel Valerio child abuse case study in context of a social worker indicates that a well funded, organized and highly trained

personnel child protection system is essential in order for social workers to be effective in their duties.

## **References**

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