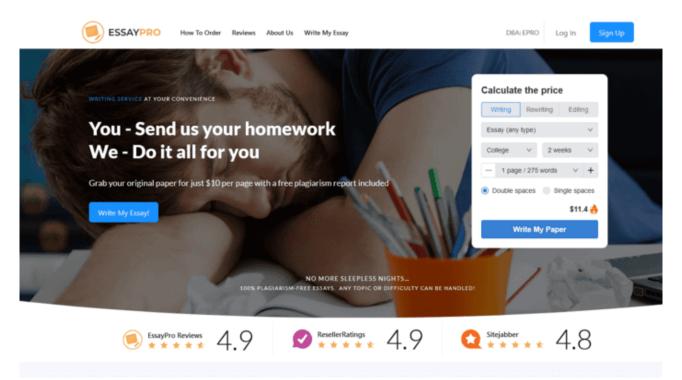
## Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy: Sick Kid or Sick Parent?(4)



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Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy: Sick Kid or Sick Parent?(4)
In relating the details of Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy (MSBP), the initial reaction is usually shock, followed quickly by fascination. The reason for the latter is that the medical community has yet to make up their minds about what exactly MSBP is. The debate: <a href="mailto:psychiatric">psychiatric</a> disorder v. child abuse. Essentially the arguments for both create a divide between the brain and behavior, though not relating the two.
Munchausen Syndrome "is a condition manifest by persons feigning or inducing illness in themselves for no other apparent gain than adopting the sick role and thus exposing themselves to painful and sometimes damaging and disfiguring medical procedures (7)." The name of the syndrome originates from an eighteenth-century Baron, Hiernymous Karl Friedrich von Munchausen, who was a military mercenary widely known for regaling fantastical stories of exploits (6). While the Baron had no psychiatric condition or any

further ties with the medical nature of the syndrome, as it is known today, his connection to

the syndrome derives from the proven fabrication of all his tales. In 1977, the British

journalist Roy Meadow first used the term "Munchausen By Proxy" in an article that named children as the primary victims of the syndrome.

At the time, the literature revealed the natural mother of the child to be the perpetrator of induced and at times actual, illness (3). It is important to note that Meadow's intended to apply MSBP to the problem of child abuse and while it is still extensively classified as such in child abuse and medical journals, the boundaries of the syndrome have been stretched with increased prevalence. The popular view of MSBP remains that it is a for...

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...I, external experience. Lack of medical data and psychological mapping of the perpetrator causes MSBP to continue and increase in frequency over time. The issue of the proxy further complicates the reality in questioning what is true and what ailments are genuine. Surveillance is the only answer offered right now, but I hope that there will soon be medical aid available for the perpetrators.

## References

This paper reflects the research and thoughts of a student at the time the paper was written for a course at Bryn Mawr College. Like other materials on Serendip, it is not intended to be "authoritative" but rather to help others further develop their own explorations. Web links were active as of the time the paper was posted but are not updated.

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