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“Proving Torture”: an ever-rising bar for medical evidence?

Session 5 panel bullet points

- The need to balance providing best quality evidence with providing reports which are accessible and deliverable in a timely way
- When I first started working at the Medical Foundation 20 years ago we saw clients once for 1-2 hours and wrote reports of about 3 pages in length These reports were IP compliant and provided sufficient evidence to support the "reasonable likelihood of torture"
- Since then the evidential threshold has been moving ever higher, fuelled by culture of disbelief and particular challenges of gender based violence.
- Now clinicians need to document more and more evidence in more and more detail, consider all possible causes for lesions. Clinicians now see clients for at least 6 hours, and spend an average of 20 hours writing a report, which are now on average 20 pages in length, with at least 3 hours for medical and legal reviews.
- This impacts on and reduces our capacity to write reports
- Medical evidence is regularly challenged.
- Feels as if we have moved beyond the high jump and are now pole vaulting. How high should the bar be?
- Producing reports is very demanding for report writers and also for survivors themselves.
- At referral panels where new referrals for reports are discussed, we feel very uncomfortable being unable to accept requests, but we do not have the capacity.
- We welcome the opportunity to further discuss this ongoing dilemma.