

Abductions from the womb

Caesarian section murder a new category of homicide

by Dr. Marlene Dalley, PhD

In the 1990s, a wave of infant abductions from North American hospitals frightened parents and brought about new security measures to protect newborn children from kidnapping. Some American hospitals even implemented a procedure of electronically tagging and monitoring newborns to prevent them from being snatched from maternity wards.

While these abductions are non-existent in Canada, there are disturbing trends surfacing in some parts of the world that once again call for a “heads up” for the safety of mothers and infants. This crime has been described by the media as “fetus” abduction – an almost unbelievable term.

These reports are too devastating for most of us to even think about, but it is important to learn as much as

we can about new and ongoing trends of abduction. Some incidents have come too close to Canada for comfort. In the United States, vivid newspaper headlines described “Fetus Taken From Slain Woman’s Womb”; in Colombia, “Baby Stolen From the Womb”, and in Korea it was “Murder-Kidnap of Mother and Infant”.

These headlines are shocking to say the least. A U.S. study*, published in the *Journal of Forensic Science* (2002), concluded that “Caesarean section murder suggests a new category of personal cause homicide”. The authors of the study found that there appeared to be organized planning before the act was carried out, and that the female abductor had two motives for her crime: to cement a partner relationship, and to fulfill a child-bearing and delivery fantasy.

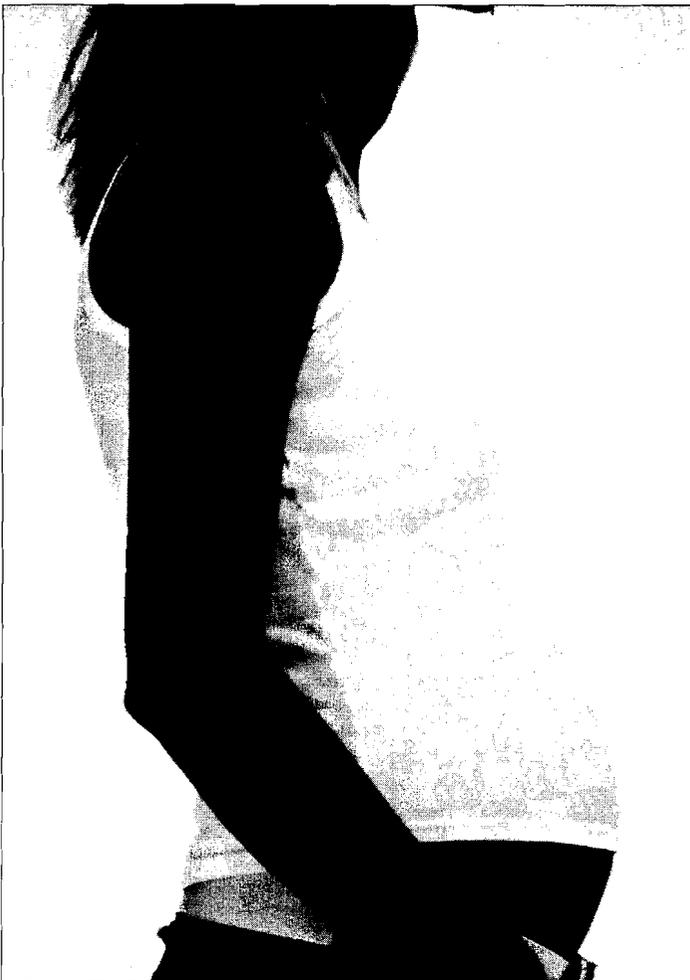
In most cases of fetus abduction, the abductor befriends the pregnant victim, all the while planning to kill her and extract the baby by Caesarean section, obviously risking the baby’s health and life. Unlike infant abductions, the fetus abductor is so determined to give birth to a child that she actually acts out the fantasy of delivering the baby herself, rather than kidnapping one already born.

While fetal abductions have not yet happened in Canada, it is important to be aware of and understand the motives and characteristics of them. Hopefully, this awareness will make us all more vigilant in our investigations, personal safety education and crime prevention undertakings.

* Burgess, A. W.; Baker, T.; Nahirny, C.; and Rabun, J. B. *Newborn Kidnapping by Cesarean Section*, *The Journal of Forensic Science*, 2002, Vol. 47 (www.astm.org).

For more information about this issue, contact Dr. Marlene Dalley, a researcher with HQ Missing Children Services, National Police Services.

STOLEN FROM THE WOMB: The new and growing trend of fetus abduction is something we should all be aware of, according to Dr. Marlene Dalley.



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