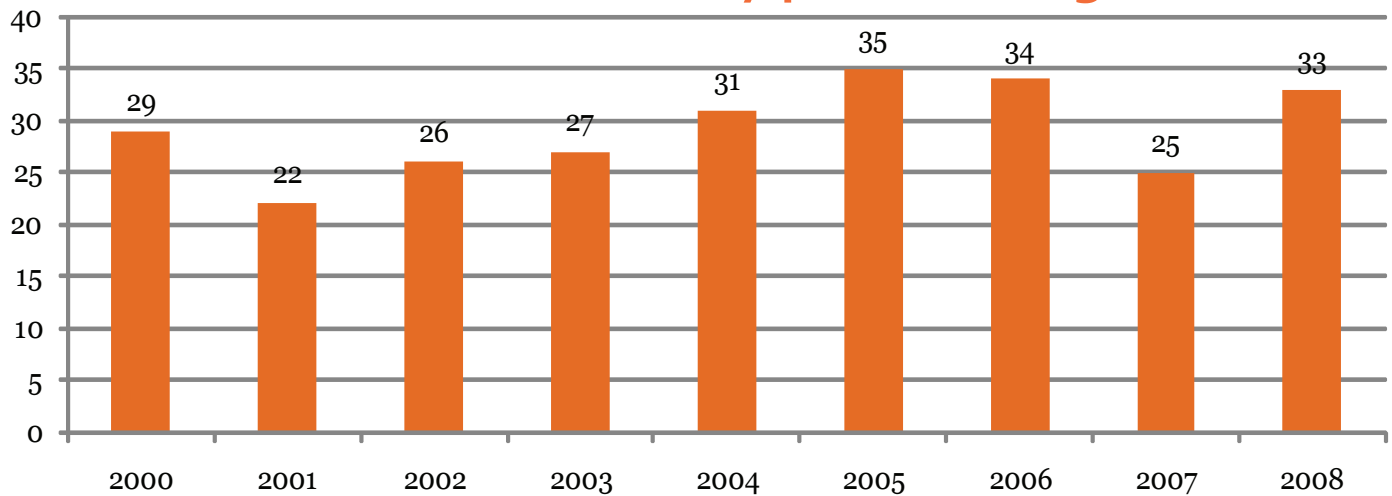


NC child homicides by parent/caregiver

(Box 3)



Source: NC Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

of child abuse or neglect if it appears that a crime may have been committed. Many times, law enforcement officers and DSS investigators work collaboratively on a case.

North Carolina is blessed to have many resources in the fight against child abuse (see Box 1). For example, we are in the midst of implementing a statewide child abuse prevention campaign, the Period of PURPLE Crying. This program is aimed at educating caregivers about infant crying and ways to handle the stresses of parenthood. Infant crying is often the proximate trigger of infant shaking, so education about normal infant crying and avoiding shaking of an infant may decrease the related morbidity and mortality. Through newborn nurseries and health care provider offices, this program is being shared with the parents of every newborn in our state. Under the leadership of Dr. Desmond Runyan, a pediatrician in the Department of Social Medicine at the UNC School of Medicine at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, data are being collected to assess the effectiveness of this intervention in the prevention of child abuse statewide.

If we look at the case in the introduction, at least one real opportunity was missed to intervene with this

hypothetical family. An intervention based on that emergency room visit might have saved RP's life. Were there other missed opportunities? Had RP come in for regular medical care and immunizations? Were there clues at those visits? Did any neighbors or relatives have concerns about RP's care? Did RP attend daycare where staff there may have noticed bruises or other injuries? It is our duty, both legally and morally, not to miss these opportunities to protect children.

As members of the medical profession and as members of society, we should value our children. Let us all work together to ensure their health and safety. Let us prevent child abuse when possible, report suspicions when appropriate and protect our next generation.

References:

¹U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families. *Child Maltreatment 2007* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009)

²Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina, statistics on Child Abuse and Neglect in North Carolina for state fiscal year 2008-2009. www.preventchildabusenc.org/resources (Accessed February 21, 2010).

³American Medical Association, Action of the AMA House of Delegates at the 2009 Interim Meeting: Council on Science and Public Health Report 2 Recommendations Adopted as Amended, and Remainder of Report Filed.



Elaine Cabinum-Foeller, MD, FAAP

is the associate professor of pediatrics at East Carolina University's Brody School of Medicine. She is the medical director of TEDI BEAR Children's Advocacy Center, providing forensic evaluation and consultation, mental health treatment and education about child abuse.