

SIDS

- Why did the term originate?
 - Improvements in public health
 - Infectious Disease
 - Vaccination
 - Sanitation
 - Awareness of other reasons for infant deaths
 - Other undiagnosed natural disease
 - Cultural factors
 - No awareness at first

SIDS

- The term was a reflection of the times
- Science was largely speculative
- Difficult to acknowledge that home environment could be harmful to an infant
- Public health achievements not fully understood in the context of early child death

SIDS

- What makes infant deaths different?
 - Infants are small
 - Recently out of the womb
 - Confusion with developmental issues
 - Transition from intrauterine to extrauterine environments
- It is hard for most people to conceive that an infant may inadvertently be put in danger

SIDS

- Why the differences in ethnic groups?
 - Cultural differences
 - Education
 - Social opportunity
- Why the geographic differences?
 - There are parts of the world where it doesn't exist as a diagnostic entity
 - Other reasons for infant death

SIDS

- The term also allowed physicians the luxury of not having to think about it anymore.
- Families did not have to think about it either.
 - The toxic parent.
 - Consequences of self-examination
 - Did I do something that killed my child?
 - But my mother did it that way!
 - Cultural and social contexts matter

SIDS

- Cultural shifts:
 - Close examination of cultural issues
 - Some of these issues are entrenched and probably difficult to address
 - In medicine:
 - "Evidence based medicine"
 - Molecular pathology

SIDS

- There have been misguided attempts to proposed changes in classification of SIDS.
 - Krous HF, Beckwith JB, Byard RW, et al. Sudden infant death syndrome and unclassified sudden infant deaths: a definitional and diagnostic approach. *Pediatrics*. Jul 2004;114(1):234-238.

SIDS

VIEWPOINT The Disappearance of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Has the Clock Turned Back?

Cutz E. The disappearance of sudden infant death syndrome: has the clock turned back? *JAMA Pediatr*. 2016;170(4):315-316.

SIDS

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Letter to the Editor: The Disappearance of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. C.J. Schmidt. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 170(10):1025-1026. August 29, 2016. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2016.1811.

SIDS

- Much of the literature is generated by individuals who are not active in death investigation.
- Reenactments are necessary
- Detailed history

SIDS

- Sudden infant death has to be treated like that in adults, with a differential diagnosis
 - Sudden cardiac death
 - Channelopathies
 - Conduction system anomalies
 - Metabolic diseases
 - Other rare causes of death
 - Dangerous cultural customs

SIDS

- To this day, there is not a single physiologic or pathologic finding that has conclusively been associated with sudden infant death
 - External arcuate nucleus anomalies
 - Abnormalities in serotonin neurotransmission
 - Abnormalities in cardiorespiratory control
 - Temporal lobe epilepsy

SIDS

- There will always be infants whose cause of death will remain unknown
- But the clock is not turning back.
