There is new guidance from the RCPCH about perplexing presentations (PP) or Fabricated Induced Illness (FII) in children available at https://childprotection.rcpch.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2021/03/Perplexing-Presentations-FII-Guidance.pdf

Some highlights:

- Think about FII earlier and with the same rigor as organic disease. There does not yet have to be evidence of harm to the child to consider the diagnosis. The term perplexing presentation allows for this.
- The term PP is used to describe the commonly encountered situation when there are alerting signs of possible FII (not yet amounting to likely or actual significant harm), when the actual state of the child’s physical, mental health and neurodevelopment is not yet clear, but there is a perceived risk of immediate serious harm to the child’s physical health or life. The essence of alerting signs is the presence of discrepancies between reports, presentations of the child and independent observations of the child, implausible descriptions and unexplained findings or parental behaviour.
- There does have to be deliberate attempt to deceive by parents or caregivers. Parental behaviour may be motivated by anxiety, erroneous belief about the child’s state of health and/or by gain for the parent/s.
- Unless there is a risk of immediate serious harm to the child’s health or life, professionals should share with the child/young person and parents their concern about the perplexing nature of some aspects of the presentation and explain the need to share information with other professionals to gather information and inform care.

**Lessons from the Front Line**

A 16 year old girl presented to the ED department accompanied by her boyfriend with a 1 week history of foul smelling vaginal discharge. She had travelled abroad 3 weeks previous to a holiday destination for a labiaplasty with vaginal tightening as she did not like the look and feel of her own genitals. This was carried out in a private hospital by a registered doctor. She chose to have the procedure and wasn’t coerced into it. A parent travelled with her and paid for the procedure. Is this FGM?

The definition of Female Genital Mutilation according to the FGM Act 2003 is: “A person is guilty of an FGM offence if they excise, infibulate or otherwise mutilate the whole or any part of a girl’s or woman’s labia majora, labia minora or clitoris. To excise is to remove part or all of the clitorises and the inner labia (lips that surround the vagina), with or without removal of the labia majora (larger outer lips). To infibulate is to narrow the vaginal opening by creating a seal, formed by cutting and repositioning the labia.”

It is an offence for any person (regardless of their nationality or residence status) to:
- perform FGM in England and Wales (section 1 of the 2003 Act)
- assist a girl to carry out FGM on herself in England and Wales (section 2 of the 2003 Act)
- assist (from England or Wales) a non-UK person to carry out FGM outside the UK on a UK national or UK resident (section 3 of the 2003 Act)

The Act also places a MANDATORY DUTY on healthcare workers, social care workers and teachers to notify the police if they discover FGM during the course of their work. See https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/female-genital-mutilation-resource-pack and http://nationalfgmcentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Legal-FactSheet-18.35.08.pdf

**What happened next?**

The police were informed and CAIT (child abuse investigation team) attended ED to interview the girl. The duty social worker was informed and a MASH referral generated. A body was discharged. The wound was healing well and the discharge was in fact from an STD not the operation. The girl refused admission and given she was not at this time considered to be at risk of further abuse, the team were advised by the police that there was no basis for keeping her in hospital. She did agree to a follow up with gynaecology.

The National FGM centre has lots of very helpful resources available on their website including this info-graphic highlighting the health consequences from different types of FGM http://nationalfgmcentre.org.uk/knowledge-hub-resources/