Very Short Introductions online

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6. Child abuse
Jonathan Herring

‘Child abuse’ examines this extremely emotive and hotly debated area of family law. The law is able to remove a child from a situation where abuse is suspected, but this is a power that must be exercised with great caution. What constitutes child abuse? There must be some consideration of cultural differences in the definition. The law has to consider a number of issues: what should be done when there is a suspicion of abuse but no proof? How bad must the abuse be before it justifies removal of a child? Judges have to deal with these questions every day.

4. Confidentiality and privacy
Charles Foster

Should doctors disclose any of their patients' confidences? When is disclosure justified? Is disclosure ever mandatory? Should there be an absolute rule of non-disclosure? If not, why not? ‘Confidentiality and privacy’ considers these questions and shows that national and international codes of medical ethics acknowledge the undesirability of an absolute rule. Why confidences should be respected, to whom the information should be confidential, and balancing competing interests are all discussed. The cases where the duty of confidentiality must or may be breached are studied and the confidentiality and privacy of children, incapacitous patients, and the dead are also reviewed.

5. Children's rights
Jonathan Herring

‘Children’s rights’ looks at different definitions of childhood that exist in the law and the rights that a child has in today's family law. Children have a right to life and the right not
to be harmed. The matter of dispute lies in the question of whether they have all the same rights that adults have. One argument is that we need to restrict people from doing things that will cause harm to them or to others if they do not understand sufficiently what they are doing. A more persuasive argument in favour of restricting children's rights might be made on the basis that doing so during childhood is necessary in order to maximize children's autonomy in adulthood.

The History of Childhood: A Very Short Introduction
James Marten

The History of Childhood: A Very Short Introduction describes the differing experiences of childhood across time and place, focusing on conflict, change, war, reform, and the issues and conditions that have shaped childhood throughout history. Childhood is a constantly shifting concept; the age at which a child becomes a youth and a youth becomes an adult has varied by class, religion, ethnicity, place, and economic need. From the rules of Confucian childrearing in twelfth-century China to the struggles of children living as slaves in the Americas or as cotton mill workers in Industrial Age Britain, this VSI shows that the lives of children reveal important and sometimes uncomfortable truths about civilization.

Family Law: A Very Short Introduction
Jonathan Herring

Family Law: A Very Short Introduction provides insight not only into what family law is, but why it is the way it is. How have laws had to respond to social changes in family life? The last few decades have seen rising divorce rates and an increase in the use of surrogate mothers. How do family courts deal with the chaos of modern family life? Family law has recently been challenged to keep up-to-date with the social and scientific changes which affect it. What is a family? What makes someone a parent? What rights should children have? What will families look like in the years ahead? What new dilemmas will the courts face?

5. Consent
Charles Foster
‘Consent’ outlines the generally recognized principles of the law of consent. It considers what is a competent adult and shows that once can demand omissions (refuse treatment), but not demand acts (insist on specific treatment). In the cases of incompetent adults and children, how one decides how to make a decision on someone else's behalf, and who does it, is discussed. The issues of when consent is not consent and ‘informed consent’ are then explained. Finally the criminal, civil, and disciplinary consequences of failing to obtain the patient's consent are discussed.

Medical Law: A Very Short Introduction
Charles Foster

Medical law is concerned with our bodies, and what happens to them during and after our lives. The core issues of medical law — organ transplantation, abortion, withdrawal of treatment, euthanasia, confidentiality, research on humans — affect us all. Medical Law: A Very Short Introduction explores different examples of these issues to illustrate the key problems and principles of medical law. When things go wrong with our bodies, we want to know what our rights are, and what governs the conduct of the clinicians into whose hands we put our lives and limbs. Dealing with matters of life and death, it can therefore have a fundamental impact on medical practice.