

Violence Against Women and Children/Family Violence —

A. Knowledge

Prevalence - marital physical violence estimates range from 11 to 37%

Psychological/behavioral/developmental impact of family violence on all members of family

Recognition that family violence is directed at those most vulnerable in family, i.e., women, children, elderly.

When discussing family violence, however, one usually is discussing battered women

Battering is a pattern of coercive control - one partner exerting power over another

Range of coercive violent behavior: physical, sexual, emotional, economic

Psychological effects of victimized: shame, fear, decreased self esteem, self-blaming, depression

Inter-relation of violence to sexism and economic dependence

Protection the victim is the foremost issue

Resources in the community and hospital

Remember: Ask about violence (if you don't ask you won't find out about it)

B. Skills

Patient education regarding understanding the dynamics of family violence, resources available to deal with the problem

Interviewing technique specific questions to ask to uncover family violence asking questions without labeling or interpreting behavior

Understanding how to utilize community resources

C. Attitudes

Understanding the reluctance to identify oneself as a victim to providers

Awareness that victim may be reluctant to provide information regarding the abusive partner

Open, non-blaming stance

Acknowledgment of violence as a medical problem

Sensitivity to needs and feelings of patients

Value of interdisciplinary collaboration

D. Barriers

Specific to provider

Provider denial of problem

Discomfort at asking about "private" issues/"non-medical" issues

Provider lacking skills to uncover violence

Specific to patient

Economic: dependence on abusive male for financial support

Personal: isolation from support mechanisms

Lack of self esteem associated with demeaning relationship

Disparity in power and influence within relationship

E. Advocacy

Political - Participation in systemic social change needed to stop violence

In-service training of staff

Community outreach and education

Legal/police/judicial involvement

Shelter advocacy and advocacy for other housing options so women and their children have a safe haven

References

McLeer L, DeVos R. A study of battered women presenting in an emergency department, AJP, Jan. 1989, Vol 79 n. 1. p. 65.

McKibbin L, Devos E, Newberger E. Victimization of Mothers of abused children, a controlled study. Pediatrics Vol 84 n. 2 Sept. 1989 p. 531.