

# *The Carter-Jenkins Center*

*presents*



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**DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE**



**SPOUSE/  
PARTNER  
ABUSE**

# **Domestic Violence Spouse/Partner Abuse**

**By**

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# Domestic Violence

## Domestic Violence, the Statutory Definition

F.S.S. 741.278: Domestic violence means any assault, aggravated assault, battery, aggravated battery, sexual battery, stalking, aggravated stalking, false imprisonment, kidnapping or any criminal offense which results in the physical injury or death of one family or household member by another who is or was residing in the same single dwelling unit.

Individuals covered by “family or household member” are: spouses or ex-spouses (no time limit), those related by blood or marriage who have lived together at some time, those who lived together as if a family (no time limit) including gay and lesbian couples and couples who have had a child together even if they have never lived together. **NOTE:** the statute does not cover teen dating relationships if no child is involved.

# **Domestic Violence**

## **Spouse/Partner Abuse**

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**We are most grateful to several organizations that deal with domestic violence. They provide useful Web pages from which much of the information here presented has been gathered. .:**

**National Council on Child Abuse and Family Violence**  
**(<http://nccafv.org/spouse.htm>)**

**Statistics about Domestic Abuse taken from:**  
**“Women’s Rural Advocacy Programs”**

# Domestic Violence

- In the U.S.A. about 3 to 4 million women are battered by their husbands or partners
- According to the *American Medical Association* domestic violence is the leading cause of injury and death for American women. On the average, about four women are murdered by their husbands/partners every day \*
- Domestic violence is the most unreported crime in the US
- Estimates are that every 9 seconds there is an incident of this type that sometimes involve the children as well
- Domestic violence happens in all male/female relationships whether married or not

# DIFFERENT TYPES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

- Approximately 95% of the victims of domestic violence are women \*
- A woman is more likely to be assaulted, hurt, raped or killed by a male partner than by any other type of assailant
- 25% of all crime is wife assault
- 70% of men who abuse their partners sexually or physically abuse their children as well. Children in such situations are abused at a rate 1500% higher than the national average
- Domestic violence is #1 cause of visits to emergency rooms. This abuse happens more frequently than car accidents, mugging and rape combined
- Women are more likely to be killed when attempting to leave their partners. Risk is 75% higher for those trying to leave than for those that stay

\* Statistics provided by the Women's Rural Advocacy Programs

# DIFFERENT TYPES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

- 37% of all women experience battering!
- 73% of battered women going to emergency rooms are already separated from their husbands
- 60% of battered women were beaten while they were pregnant
- 34% of the female homicide victims over age 15 were killed by their husbands, ex-husbands, or boyfriends
- If only spouse abuse is examined, divorced or separated men committed 79% of the assaults. Husbands 21%
- Physical violence in dating relationships ranges from 20 to 35%
- 20 to 52% of high school and college dating couples are involved in physical abuse

# DIFFERENT TYPES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

- 93% of women that killed their mates had been battered by them
- 67% killed them to protect themselves or their children at the moment of the murder
- Prison terms for killing husbands is said to be twice as long as for killing wives
- The amount spent to shelter animals is three times as the amount spent to provide emergency shelter to women from domestic abuse situations!
- Remember that family violence kills more women every five years in the U.S. than the total number of Americans soldiers who have been killed in the Iraq War during that time!

# Types of Domestic Violence

- There are many forms of domestic violence. They are seen occasionally in isolation but more frequently several forms of it are combined:
  - 1) Physical abuse of various degrees of severity including slapping, kicking, biting, shoving, pushing, choking, punching, using weapons which on occasion lead to very severe injuries and/or death.
  - 2) Sexual violence including forced rape (marital rape)

# DIFFERENT TYPES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

## 3) Verbal, psychological and/or emotional abuse:

- Includes all forms of intimidation e.g. name calling, threats, insults, harassment, neglecting, ridiculing, demeaning, yelling, hateful looks, gesturing, silences, threats to harm the children, or to take them away... “If you...I'll kill you, etc”
- The abusers send the message that it is his victim that is responsible for his behavior since she is an all around failure. He conveys as well the idea, that away from him, she can not manage
- Frequently, the above is accompanied by sexual and physical violence and abuse.

# DIFFERENT TYPES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

- A recent study, in the 02/2007 issue of the Gerontologist showed, that 26.5 % of women over 65 years and older, reported violence by an intimate partner (mostly of the combined type). Thus, violence is not only a problem for the younger women
- This is probably, in the authors view, an underestimate
- According to this study Health care costs are 19% higher for abused women
- Only 3% of these women had been asked about abuse by their health providers!
- The aim of the abuser seems to be to destroy the victims self esteem and by this and other means acquire control over their partners. The results are traumatic and lasting.

# DIFFERENT TYPES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

- Though domestic violence refers mostly to spouse/partner abuse, there are many other serious and problematic forms of domestic abuse such as child, elderly and male abuse.
- Child abuse not uncommonly takes place in the course of domestic violence and can become an integral part of it \*
- There are as well (though in very small numbers) instances where females abuse their male partners. Males are of course, embarrassed to say that their wives beat them up
- In the USA child abuse has epidemic proportions with more than 2.5 millions of cases per year and hundreds of deaths resulting from it.
- Like with spouse abuse, child abuse cuts across all segments of society, socioeconomic groups, cultural, ethnic or religious boundaries

# Why is spouse abuse so common?

- Even at this time, there are still cultures where women are the property of the husband, and were he has the right to use force, in relating to her when necessary
- Verbal and physical violence, can and frequently are learned behaviors from parents, relatives etc
- Its goal is generally to maintain absolute and abusive control over the partner.
- A high correlation exists between alcohol and drug use and domestic violence
- We live in a violent culture. Violence is shown everywhere e.g. movies, sports, news media, newspapers, etc
- Male violence is generally condoned with many believing that domestic violence is a private issue

## **OTHER TYPES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE**

- At times, as mentioned, it includes child and elderly abuse as well, encompassing five major forms.:
  - 1) physical abuse
  - 2) sexual abuse
  - 3) emotional abuse
  - 4) neglect
  - 5) combinations thereof.
- Child abuse is common happening under many different circumstances and in different situations. Here, we are specifically referring to the above mentioned forms of abuse, that are common in and concurrent with domestic violence.
- Its effects are enormously detrimental and last a life time

# DIFFERENT TYPES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

## Elderly abuse:

- The term is used to describe mistreatment of elderly persons in either home or institutional settings
- It is a neglected issue but a growing concern in our society
- 1.6 to 2 million older Americans are victims of abuse or neglect in domestic and institutional settings per year
- According to the U.S House of Representatives Select Committee on Aging, women are the most likely victims as well as persons over 75 and individuals who are dependent on others for care and protection

## **Why do many women tolerate the abuse?**

- There is no common profile for battered women, they come from all sectors in Society.
- They tend to feel degraded, worthless and lack self esteem. Some think they are failures as wives and mothers to the point of believing that they deserve the mistreatment
- Many think it is their obligation to keep the family together, particularly for the sake of the children
- Others feel that they will be blamed for provoking or accepting violence
- A common fear is having to face economic hardship. Some may have no job skills thus complicating matters further
- Remember too that they are frequently isolated by their husbands from family and friends

# Why do many women tolerate the abuse?

- They may have nowhere to go. There may be few or no resources in their communities
- Many would like the violence to end but not the relationship
- They fear being attacked, or the children being hurt, if they attempt to flee. It is at the point of fleeing that they may face the most severe danger, including death on occasion
- It is estimated that 50% of women who leave an abusive relationship return to the relationship an average of five times

# What about the batterers?

- Like the battered the batterers come from all social, economic, racial, religious and age groups
- Frequently they deny the battering and/or its effects on the victims, including the children
- They tend not to accept responsibility and may blame the victim, alcohol, stress, or drugs
- Frequently they are abnormally possessive and jealous, isolating the victim from family and friends
- May have grown in a similar home or for some reason may have developed very negative attitudes towards women.
- Behind this “macho” behavior there may be much anxiety about their masculine identity, insecurity, feelings of powerlessness, etc

# Why do men batter women?

- Very commonly batterers were raised in abusive homes which is considered a high risk factor
- Battering is learned and willful behavior not a mental disorder
- They use physical force to dominate and control women
- This may be their way to handle anger, guilt or frustration since frequently they lack communication skills
- Occasionally they experience remorse or look sorry, promising to behave better but that rarely happens
- Until recently there have been no consequences for this behavior so that they got away with it
- It follows, that victims must be supported and defended and the offenders arrested and convicted for their behavior

# **What should be done?**

- Increase the awareness of these problems on a national/international scale
- Increase resources in every community to help such cases, including availability of shelters, counseling services, etc
- Develop legal aid programs to help with obtaining restraining orders, divorces, custody issues etc
- Stronger and more effective laws are needed in relation to this type of crime
- The police, physicians and other authorities, need better training in this regard so that more effective and secure interventions are provided

# **What should be done?**

- If necessary prepare a safety plan. They are recommended and available in shelters and by state and local domestic violence coalitions.
- They protect women and their children from the abuser and help in organizing a safe escape
- Victim advocates are available on the phone and the internet
- Their local hospital can provide patients with addresses of local shelters

# What to watch for

- These patients not uncommonly try to cover their lesions by wearing clothes to fit that purpose
- They have ready explanations for any lesions visible, not wanting to raise any suspicions as to the true nature of the problem, on the part of relatives, neighbors, friends, family, co-workers or even doctors, and/or other authorities
- This is done out of fear, to protect the abuser or the children, out of shame, etc
- Typically, they may have bruises on the face, neck, arms, legs or any part of the body, in various stages of resolution
- They may show signs of swelling or puffiness of the face, around the eyes, black marks anywhere, etc

# What about help?

## THE NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE

- This free service receives more than 16,000 calls per month from victims, friends, family members, police, general public etc. All calls are confidential
- They offer safety plans, crisis interventions, general information about all these issues and can give referrals to local providers of help.
- They can do that in more than 140 different languages since they have access to interpreter services!

PHONE NUMBERS ARE:

1-800-799-SAFE or 1-800-799-7233

1-800-787-3224

For Domestic and Sexual Violence Hot Line: 1-800-500-1119

For Child, Disabled or Elder Abuse Hot Line: 1-800-962-2873



# What should physicians do?

- Battered women should be assessed in a private place, ideally by themselves. Questioning them in front of the partner may endanger them.
- That may be difficult to do because battered women are frequently accompanied by their partners who want to be present at all times, answer for them, etc. Such behaviors should raise your level of suspicion
- Try to provide an atmosphere where she can speak freely and give written referral information, phone numbers etc, in terms of resources available for battered women
- Document everything carefully and completely
- The patients confidentiality is essential. Do not discuss their information with the abuser because that may further endanger them
- With persons of other cultures someone from the same culture should do the interviewing.



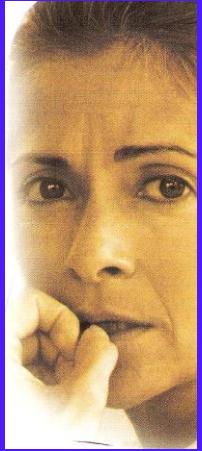
## What should physicians do?

- Be aware of the problem. Given its frequency, most if not all women should be screened for current, past or family history of domestic violence
- Recognizing that we may be saving lives will help us overcome our initial reluctance to address this issue
- Assuring patients that all women are being asked may facilitate the discussion
- Remember that many of these women come with vague complaints, are reluctant to talk about the abuse, may be excessively covered to hide lesions, swellings etc, or may have visible lesions or marks in different stages of resolution that do not fit well with their explanations



# What should physicians do?

- Make it clear that she is not alone, that you understand and know about these things and that you will help
- Did someone hit you? Was it your partner? Do you and your partner ever fight? Are you afraid of him? What happens if he does not get his way? Is he jealous? Does he force you to have sex? Does he drink, do drugs? Does that makes matters worse, etc? All are all legitimate and direct questions to ask



# THE END

**Any questions?**

**Help the Center to continue its informational and educational efforts across the world by sending your tax deductible contributions to:**

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# The End

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