

Introduction to Domestic Violence

Dyson Initiative - Community
Pediatrics
Columbia University



What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is defined as the actual or threatened *physical, sexual, psychological or economic abuse* of an individual by someone with whom they have or had an intimate relationship with.

National Statistics – U.S. Dept. of Justice Report (1998)

Overall DV Crimes Committed in 1998	1,033,660
Murders	1,830
Gender	Women are 5x more likely than men to be victimized, 767 versus 146 per 100,000
Race	Black women are 35% higher than any other groups, latino women 2.5% more than any other group.
Economic	Women in households with lower income experienced violence at a higher rate.

National Statistics – Cont'd

Marital Status	Murder appears to be more prevalent in divorced & separated couples than among married couples.
Ages	Mostly between 20 to 24 years old.
Location & Times	Mostly in the evening and in their own home.
Children	43% children resided in the household, and 27% were present at time of incident.

State Statistics

- Four women a week are killed as a result of DV.
- One person is victimized by physical violence in the home every 3 minutes, 20 every hour, 432 every day and 157,680 every year.

Local Statistics

Total DV # of arrests and complaints for the borough of Manhattan North, 96th St. to the tip of Manhattan, 1999

– Arrests 1999: 3,833

– Complaints 1999: 4,291

Washington Heights/ Inwood

– Arrests 1999: 2,047

– Complaints 1999: 2,125

Impact of Domestic Violence on Children

- Effect on Children
Stress, which also causes physical symptoms of enuresis, asthma, headaches, abdominal complaints, and self-abusive behaviors. Emotional problems include anxiety, depression, guilt and confusion.

Screening Tools for Pediatricians

- “Routine Screening for DV in Pediatric Practice” manual and Health Resource Center on DV “Screening Patients for DV” manual
 - The purpose of these guidebooks is to help pediatricians when they are confronted with one of our major public health problem.
 - Every patient represents an opportunity for the pediatrician to explore the effects of hidden attitudes on the health of the family.
 - When an abused woman who is treated in a health care setting experiences respect, caring and interest in her thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and well-being, she may discover that she can pursue her own choices without fear of retaliation.

Ways of Approaching the Issue

- Becoming sensitive to and knowledgeable about the issue.
- Developing a supportive and non-threatening environment.
- Developing community linkages and making appropriate referrals.
- Intervening on behalf of the battered woman.
- Allowing the parent to take the steps to get help.
- Keeping the focus on the family – intervening on behalf of the parents is a way to protect children.

AAP Statement Regarding Screening for DV

- The AAP states that “the abuse of women is a pediatric issue,” and that, “intervening on behalf of battered women is an active form of child abuse prevention...Helping parents helps children.”

Necessary Tools for Residents

- Familiarize yourselves with the issue of DV and how it is affecting the families/children in the community you serve
- Familiarize yourselves with screening instruments used by other pediatricians
- Develop the sensitivity and skills necessary to identify and act on the issue
- Familiarize yourselves with the community resources available to make appropriate referrals