


“...a son or a slave is property
and there can be no injustice to
one’s own property.”

- Aristotle


Rule of Thumb



**It is prohibited to hit one’s wife with a
stick thicker than one’s thumb**

(English common law)

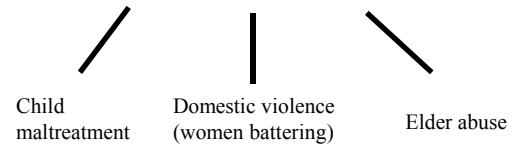
Definition of Violence



“Violence is the threatened or actual use of
physical force or power against another
person, against oneself, or against a group
or community which either results in, or has
a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death,
or deprivation.”

CDC. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/su6004a13.htm>.


Family Violence




Child
maltreatment

Domestic violence
(women battering)


Elder abuse

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- 53-70% of men who abuse their spouses abuse their children
 - Women who leave abusers are at about 75% greater a risk of being killed than if they stay, especially during the first 6-8 weeks.


Statistics

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- More than 25% of violence is among people who are related.
 - Women are more likely to be victimized through assault, battery, rape or homicide by current or former partner than by all assailants combined.
 - Battering is the single most common cause of injuries to women, surpassing that of car accidents and muggings combined.


(Bureau of Justice, 1986)

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- 2 to 4 million women are severely assaulted by their partner
 - Battered women have been reported to include
 - 20% of all medical visits by women
 - 30% of all ER visits
 - Only 8% of MD's diagnosis at discharge correctly indicated spouse abuse despite explicit information in the medical records

Homicides

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- >50% of all women murdered in the U.S. were killed by male partners
 - 12% of murdered men are killed by female partners

(JAMA:1992, Council on Scientific Affairs, AMA)



Review of ER Visits

- 19% presented at least eleven times with trauma
- 23% presented with 6-10 abuse-related injuries
- In most cases, the past history of injuries was not identified



Physical Abuse During Pregnancy

- 3 to 16% prevalence of physical and sexual abuse
- Abuse was recurrent, 60% reporting two or more episodes

(JAMA 1992)




Barriers to Recognition

- Violence does not occur in relationships that appear normal
- Battered women are responsible for their abuse
- Domestic violence is a private matter



GENERAL POINTS

- ABUSE REPRESENTS PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR
- THE HALLMARK OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS RECURRENCE
- IDENTIFY EARLY SO AS TO INTERVENE
- HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS MAY BE SIGNIFICANT POINT OF CONTACT FOR VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE
- PHYSICIANS MAY BE FIRST AND ONLY PERSON TO WHOM VICTIMS OF ABUSE REACH OUT
- OFTEN THERE IS A LONG HISTORY OF EMOTIONAL/SEXUAL ABUSE BEFORE INJURY IS ACTUALLY SEEN



Audiotape

- 6 year old female witnessing her mother and mother's boyfriend fighting



Some Statistics

- It is estimated that between 2.3 and 10 million children are exposed to intimate partner violence each year in the U.S.
- As many as 500,000 children may be encountered by police during domestic violence arrests each year in the U.S.
- Nationally, 75% of battered women say their children are physically or sexually abused.




More Facts

- There is an overlap of 30% to 60% between violence against children and violence against women in the same families
- Domestic violence has been shown to occur disproportionately in homes with children under age 5.
- Studies have shown that 25% of domestic homicides are witnessed by the children of the victim.



More Facts

- Although many adults believe that they have protected their children from exposure to domestic violence, 80-90% of children in those homes can give detailed descriptions of the violence experienced in their families.



Dynamics in the Family

- Isolation
 - Limited feedback regarding self-worth
 - Verbal abuse to control behavior
 - Children feel responsible or unable to control violence
 - Lack social skills
- Decreased Parent Availability
- Chronic Stress
- Violence as the Norm



Dynamics in the Family (Continued)

- Perpetrator may use children as a control tactic against adult victim
 - Blame children's bad behavior
 - Threaten violence toward children or pets
 - Hold children hostage or abduct them to gain victim compliance
 - Talk negatively to children about the victim parent's behavior



Impact on Children

- Reactions may vary based on:
 - Age
 - Cultural Context
 - Intensity and Frequency of Abuse
 - Coping Skills of Child
 - Degree of Isolation
 - Availability of External Support Persons



Impact on Children


(Continued)

- Emotional and Behavioral Difficulties
- Traumatic Stress Reactions
- Increased Risk of Physical Injury
- Ambivalence towards the Violent Parent
- Imitation of behaviors and attitudes
- Desensitization to Violence




Potential Impacts at Different Ages

- Infants
- Toddlers/Preschoolers
- School Age Children
- Adolescents



Facts about the Effects

- Research shows that children who witness domestic violence are at risk for maladaptive responses in one or more of the following areas of functioning: (a) behavioral, (b) emotional, (c) social, (d) cognitive, and (e) physical.
- Many adolescents who grew up in violent homes are at risk for recreating the abuse relationships they have observed.



One More Fact about Effects

- Witnessing violence as a child is associated with adult reports of depression, trauma-related symptoms and low self-esteem among women, and trauma related symptoms among men.




The Bottom Line

- Watching, hearing or later learning of a parent being harmed by a partner threatens children's sense of stability and security typically provided by their family.



Intervention

- Become familiar with the host of services available for domestic violence victims in your community.
- Ensure that referrals are coordinated and are not difficult to access, conflicting or overwhelming to the victim.
- Reporting to state Abuse Registry.



Reporting Domestic Violence as Child Abuse

- The Hotline will accept a report when:
 - There is reasonable cause to suspect that a child (under 18 years old)
 - who can be located in FLORIDA, or is temporarily out of the state but expected to return in the immediate future
 - has been harmed or is believed to be threatened with harm
 - from a person responsible for the care of the child.
- Concept of Threatened Harm



Reporting Child Abuse

Description of Harm

- **ABUSE:** Non-accidental infliction of physical or psychological injury or sexual abuse by a parent, adult household member or other person responsible for care of the child.
- **NEGLECT:** Failure/omission by a caretaker to provide the care, supervision, services or protection necessary to maintain physical and mental health.
- **THREATENED HARM:** A situation, circumstances or behavior which would lead a prudent person to have reasonable cause to suspect that abuse or neglect has occurred or may occur in the immediate future if no intervention is provided.



Some Risk Factors Considered when Making a Safety Assessment

- Child's age
- Accessibility of perpetrator to child
- Repeated and/or escalating episodes of violence
- Weapons
- Threats
- Steps taken by caregiver to protect child from further harm
- Criminal History
- Abuse History
- Domestic Violence History (as a victim or a perpetrator)

Child's Safety vs. Mother's Safety

- This is a topic that has sparked controversy between child advocates and DV victim advocates.
- Sometimes difficult to find a balance.
- The PI must preserve the family life of the parents and child, to the maximum extent possible, by enhancing the parental capacity for adequate child safety.
- However, a protective investigator's first and foremost task is to ensure the safety of the child(ren) involved in a report.

Child's Safety vs. Mother's Safety

(Continued)

- In some instances, making the safest decision for the child means removing the child(ren) from the DV victim.
- Child cannot return until situation is truly safer for both mother and child(ren).
 - Law enforcement
 - Court intervention (DV, dependency, and criminal)
 - Community services to family
 - Victim cooperation

DOCUMENTATION

- MEDICAL RECORD IS A LEGAL INSTRUMENT
- PRECISE HISTORICAL INFORMATION AND PHYSICAL EXAM
- RECORD PATIENT'S EXACT WORDS: "DIRECT QUOTE"
- DETAILED PHYSICAL FINDING
 - location
 - distribution
 - shape or pattern
 - color
- IMPRESSION STATEMENT
 - consistency with the reported injury episode
 - medical opinion regarding cause
 - abuse/battery
- PLAN
 - photographs and/or drawings
 - referral to social work and/or law enforcement

EARLY IDENTIFICATION A MUST

- SCREENING PROTOCOL
 - ROUTINELY ASSESSING ALL PATIENTS FOR VIOLENCE
 - EVERY WOMAN SHOULD BE ASKED ABOUT ABUSE AND VIOLENCE IN HER LIFE
- ESSENTIAL PART OF:
 - SOCIAL HISTORY
 - REVIEW OF SYMPTOMS
 - EVALUATION OF CHIEF COMPLAINT
- SCREENING SHOULD BE WITH SIMPLE AND DIRECT QUESTIONS IN A SAFE AND CONFIDENTIAL ENVIRONMENT
- 80% OF PATIENTS FELT IT IS APPROPRIATE FOR PHYSICIANS TO ASK ABOUT FAMILY VIOLENCE



COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- **Domestic Violence Hotline 305-349-5813**
- **Advocates For Victims**
 - North Dade 305-758-2546
 - South Dade 305-247-4249
- **Switchboard of Miami 305-358-4357**
- **Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence 1-800-500-1119**