Domestic Violence

Working Definition of Woman Abuse:
Domestic violence involves the intent by the partner to intimidate, either by threat or by use of physical force on her person, her children, and/or her property.
The purpose of the assault is to control her behavior (either by preventing her from doing what she wishes to do or by forcing her to do something against her wishes).
The perpetrator accomplishes this by the inducement of fear. Underlying all abuse is a power imbalance between the victim and the offender.

Myths About Domestic Abuse:

- Men who assault their partners are mentally ill.
- Alcohol causes a man to beat his partner.
- Only poor women get beaten.
- Women provoke violence. Therefore, they deserve what they get.
- Women enjoy the abuse and find it sexually stimulating.
- If women were really bothered by the assault, they would speak up.
- Men who beat their partners are a danger to the community.
- Assaulted women could leave their abusive partners if they wanted to.
- Pregnant women are protected from violent attacks.
- Professionals are trained to deal with this problem effectively.
- Children are not really harmed by this problem.
Indicators of Domestic Abuse

Behavioral:
- Ambivalent/Indecisive/Confused
- Minimization of injuries
- Injuries inconsistent with history of the incident
- Frequent visits to a healthcare facility
- Appears fearful/anxious/nervous/embarrassed
- Little or no eye contact while explaining the injury
- Gives exaggerated denial of violence as cause of injury
- Gives quick response to cause of injury before asked
- Shows extreme agitation while explaining cause of injury
- Indication of social isolation/lack of freedom in her life
- Anger/homicidal ideation/rage
- Time delay between injury and presentation for treatment
- Complains of “marital family problems”

NOTE: The behavior of the partner and children should also be carefully observed. Their conduct should also be taken into consideration in the overall assessment of the woman.

Behavior of Partner:
- Does not leave woman alone with hospital staff
- Speaks on behalf of the woman/belittles or minimizes what she says
- May appear over protective or under concerned
- May appear demanding/controlling of the woman
- Over solicitous with care providers
- Instant “Male Bonding Syndrome” e.g. male health care provider talking to woman and partner comes in and starts conversation with professional like they have known each other for a long time and ignores her; indicating that the male bond is more important than she is.

Behavior of Children:
- Unusual behavior in children (i.e. fearful, protective, anxious, overly concerned about father’s reaction)
- Abusive toward mother (verbal/physical)
- No affect

Physical (Specific):
- Single or Multiple injuries
- Injuries to face, neck, head, and trunk
- Fractures, broken bones, sprains (jaw, fingers, ribs, collar bones)
- Lacerations, contusions (in different stages of healing)
- Bite, burn/scald and/or strangulation marks
• Perforated eardrums
• Eye injuries
• Dental injuries
• Dizziness, numbness
• Stomach, chest, pelvic pain
• Internal injuries (concussions, damaged spleens, kidneys)
• Anal, vaginal, pelvic injuries/infections
• Injuries in pregnant women (genitals, breasts, abdomen)
• Any signs of old, untreated and treated injuries
• Recurring physical complaints
• “accident-prone” history

**Emotional/ Psychological (non-specific)**
• Fatigue
• Anxiety attacks
• Headaches
• Depression, severe and frequent crying spells
• Sleeping difficulties (insomnia, nightmares)
• Eating Disorders
• Hyperventilation/ Palpitations
• Substance misuse
• Suicidal ideation
• Muscle aches
• Flat affect, affect incongruent with extent of injury
• Unkempt appearance
• Persistent Psychological complaints
Intervention With Assaulted Women-Theoretical Framework

Psychological Experience Of the Victim

Fear
Denial/Manipulation
Learned Helplessness
Internalized Blame
Isolation

Social Context

Attitudes of family and friends
Privacy of Home
Myths about Wife assault
Historical Role of Women
Belief in two-parent family as ideal

Lack of Community Resources

- Emergency Shelter
  - Waiting List-
- Second Stage and Permanent Housing
  - Limited-
- Financial Assistance
  - Poverty-
- Legal System
  - No real protection or accountability-
- Employment Opportunities
  - Rare-
- Lack of Support Services
  - Day Care-
  - Counseling, Advocacy-
  - Professional attitudes and level of skill limited-

Obstacles Women Face