

## Woman Abuse in the Perinatal Period

How can health care providers make a difference?

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1

## Objectives

- To provide 'practical information' about the issue of woman abuse to health care providers
- To discuss the process of legitimizing violence against women work through the development of policies, procedures and practices
- To discuss how 'Best Practice Guidelines' can facilitate and shape our practice when addressing the issue of woman abuse
- To discuss the benefits and logistics of an integrated response to woman abuse.

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## To put this in context

Talk (briefly) about the prevalence, dynamics, and health consequences of woman abuse

Talk about 'our practice' and what nurses can do.

Talk about taking care of ourselves

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"Violence has become so pervasive in our society that it is looked upon as, if not exactly normal, perhaps inevitable."

Ontario Public Health Association -  
A Public Health Approach To Violence Prevention

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## Definition

**Woman abuse** involves the intent to intimidate a woman, either by actual or by threat of physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse, by someone with whom she has an intimate, family or romantic relationship. An intimate partner includes: husband, common-law partner, boyfriend, or same sex partner, as well as ex-husband, ex-partner, or ex-boyfriend.

Best Practice Guidelines, Ontario Hospital Association, 1999

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"Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private life."

United Nations Declaration On Violence Against Women

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## Prevalence

- **51%** of women over the age of sixteen had experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual assault
- **~25%** of women had been abused by their intimate partners
- **56%** of abused women were aged 18-34

(Canadian Violence Against Women Survey, 1993)  
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7

## Abuse during Pregnancy

- **~40%** of cases, abuse began during pregnancy (MacFarlane, 1993)
- **21%** of women were abused *during* pregnancy (BCRCP, 2003)
- **95%** of women who were abused in the first trimester were also abused in the 3-month period after delivery (Health Canada, 1999)

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## Did you know...

*pregnant women have a higher risk of experiencing violence during pregnancy than they do of experiencing problems such as pre-eclampsia, placenta previa or gestational diabetes ... health concerns for which they are routinely screened?*

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Women abused during pregnancy were **4x** more likely as other abused women to report having experienced very serious violence

i.e. beaten up, choked, threatened with a gun/knife or sexually assaulted

Of women who were abused during pregnancy, **~100,000** reported they suffered a miscarriage or other internal injuries as a result of abuse (Johnson, 1996)

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## Abuse during Pregnancy

- Common sites
  - Head, neck, abdominal region (McFarlane, 1993; Purwar et al., 1999)
- Stewart & Cecutti (1993) found
  - Abdomen (63.9%)
  - Buttocks (13.9%)
  - Head/neck and extremities (11.1%)
- 67% of women were struck on more than one body parts (Stewart & Cecutti, 1993)

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*After adjusting for significant demographic factors (age, ethnicity, education, relationship status) the risk of becoming an attempted or completed femicide victim was **3-fold** higher in women who were abused during pregnancy*

(McFarlane et al., 2002)

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## A 'Window of Opportunity'



'If abuse during pregnancy is predictive of severe and potentially lethal abuse, pregnant women should be so advised.'

(McFarlane et al., 2002, p. 28)

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## What is our role?

Screening

Identification & Appropriate Response

- ※ Awareness
- ※ Advocacy
- ※ Education

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And, ...

Policy,  
Procedure  
and Protocol  
Development



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## Policy

- a definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions
- a high-level overall plan embracing the general goals and acceptable procedures especially of a governmental body
- a definitive statement of an organization's position on an issue of concern to the effective operation of the organization

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## Procedure

- a series of steps followed in a regular definite order <legal or surgical *procedure*>
- a traditional or established way of doing things
- a detailed step-by-step description of the sequence of activities necessary for the achievement of the policy
- **AKA: protocol**

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## Protocol

- an original draft, minute, or record of a document or transaction
- a detailed plan of a scientific or medical experiment, treatment, or procedure

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- The protocol should be set within a philosophical framework which defines the mission, goals, and objectives of the **involved organizations** as well as defining an ongoing review process.

“Not having comprehensive, collaborative and appropriate policies in place to respond to woman abuse, or having gaps in existing policies, can result in inappropriate and unsafe responses by service providers.”

PEI Woman Abuse Protocols

## How BPGs help

- Facilitate and shape our practice
- Provide content
  - summary of recent literature
- Provide evidence-based recommendations

## A few words about BPGs

- Need to be critically appraised
- Many tools out there
  - AGREE instrument
    - Appraisal of **G**uidelines **R**esearch & **E**valuation
  - Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP)

## Examples of BPG's

- PPPEO
  - Woman Abuse in the Perinatal Period: Guidelines for Care Providers (2004)
- RNAO
  - Woman Abuse: Screening, Identification and Initial Response (2005)
- SOGC
  - Intimate Partner Violence Consensus Statement (2005)

So, ...



What would your policy or procedure include?

## Procedures

Things to include:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

## Essential Elements

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

## Protocols should be ...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

***All staff should know it exists and have received education about it***

## Some examples

Intra- & Inter Agency Linkages

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

## Collaboration can...

- Reduce system induced trauma
  - ie. ↓ repeated 'interviews'
- Create better methods of preventing and detecting abuse
  - higher reporting rates & earlier intervention
- Ensure individualized, comprehensive and responsive management
- May minimize 'burnout' / vicarious trauma
- May keep women and children safer

## Can be hindered by...

- Territorialism
- Undue concerns re:
  - reporting process, who to report to
  - limits/boundaries of confidentiality
- Inadequate resources
- Historical boundaries between groups
- Lack of training
- ***Lack of supportive policies and procedures***

## Recipe for Success

- ✓ Involve all key players
- ✓ Have a realistic strategy
- ✓ Establish a shared vision
- ✓ Agree to disagree
- ✓ Keep your eye on the 'ball'
- ✓ Encourage ownership at all levels
- ✓ Institutionalize partnership

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## Recap

1. Identify a core group to facilitate change
2. Create opportunities to develop a shared understanding of woman abuse
3. Encourage expression of different points of view
4. Start with a manageable task
5. Have '**champions**' to facilitate change
6. Provide education, training and support staff, women and families
7. Measure change and evaluate outcomes



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## Community Development (CD)

- Way of mobilizing resources/skills
- Process of **planned change** that helps build healthy communities
- Distinct strategy characterized by a **partnership** of 'community' members to build strengths, self-sufficiency and well being

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## It involves ...



- ✓ Identifying the issues/problems
- ✓ Developing plans, skills, capacity and ability to act on concerns
- ✓ Identifying available/required resources
- ✓ Implementing plans for change
- ✓ Informing other organizations of work
- ✓ Open communication
- ✓ Participating in community initiatives
- ✓ Awareness of community resources

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## Challenges to CD

- Professional
- Community
- Organizational

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## Overcoming challenges

1. Strike a task team/interagency committee
2. Come together in a community forum
3. Dialogue with like and invested agencies

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## Where to start

- Establish a 'task team'
  - Establish 'terms of reference'
    - mandate and accountability
    - size, structure, roles, responsibilities, chair
  - Define guiding principles, key concepts
    - Mission statement
  - Identify immediate priorities & long term goals

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## What else?

- Define
  - Target population and/or area
    - assess needs for info, education, support &/or RX
- Identify resources and gaps
  - Strategies for filling gaps
- Set priorities
- Develop a communication strategy

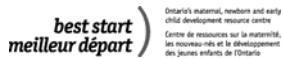
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## Some resources

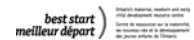
- Best Start
  - How to Work with Coalitions
  - How to Build Partnerships with Physicians



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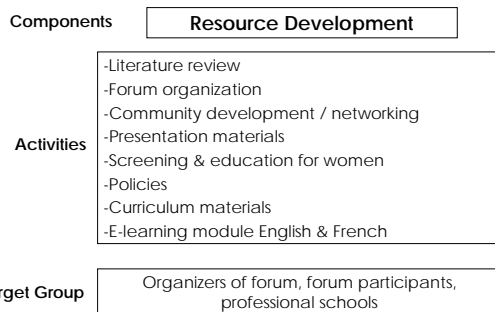


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40

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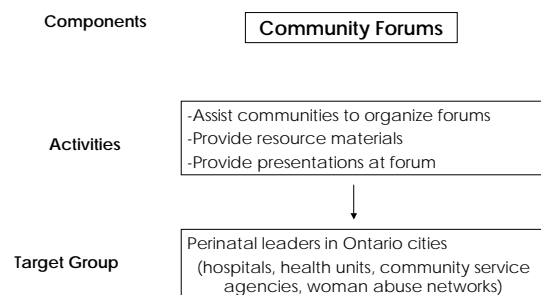


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### Woman Abuse in the Perinatal Period

**Components** Ongoing Community Education & Support

**Activities**

- Website with guidelines, resources
- Newsletters
- Education sessions
- Consultation
- Conference presentations
- Tele & Videoconferencing
- Assistance with policy development

**Target Group** Community, health unit & hospital care providers

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### Woman Abuse in the Perinatal Period

**Components** Project Management

**Activities**

- Project Steering Group
- Project Advisory Group
- Process evaluation
- Outcome evaluation
- Report to Ministry
- Communication with other groups involved in perinatal care, woman abuse & with perinatal partnership organizations

**Target Group** Ontario government, Best Start, Woman Abuse Task Forces/Networks, professional organizations

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### Woman Abuse in the Perinatal Period

Short-term Outcomes

Increased comfort with screening

Increased knowledge re prevalence, dynamics, health consequences

Increase sense of professional responsibility in supporting abused women

Increased recognition of the impact of working with women who are abuse on professionals

Increased hospital, public health units and community service agencies have workplace policies & procedures for responding to woman abuse

Increased intersectoral, multidisciplinary collaboration around woman abuse

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### Woman Abuse in the Perinatal Period

Long-term Outcomes


Increased consistent, evidence-based screening, safety planning, documentation and referral for women who are abused

↓

More women who are abused are aware of resources, have a safety plan, and do not suffer further abuse

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## What about Challenges?



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

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## Vicarious Trauma

Compassion fatigue

Secondary traumatization

Secondary stress disorder

Insidious trauma



*Label, define what happens, why it happens and how to live healthily with the experiences*

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## Vicarious Trauma (VT)

- Outcome of anti-violence work
- Effects are cumulative
- Built upon memories of repeated stories of inhumane acts of cruelty
- Permanent, subtle or marked change in the personal, political, spiritual and professional outlook of the counsellor or advocate
- Life-changing effect on individuals
  - can affect view of the world, relationships and connections to families, friends & communities

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## Some of the Effects

Physical reactions      Grief      Isolation

Anxiety      Rage      Confusion

Despair      Sadness

Apathy      Pain      Illness

**Drains strength, confidence, desire,  
friendship, calmness, laughter**

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## Personal Impact of Vicarious Trauma

Yassen, 1995

<b>Cognitive</b>	↓ concentration, confusion, spaciness, loss of meaning, ↓ self-esteem, preoccupation with trauma, apathy, rigidity, disorientation, self-doubts, perfectionism, minimization
<b>Emotional</b>	Powerlessness, anxiety, guilt, survivor guilt, shutdown, numbness, fear/helplessness, sadness, depression, hypersensitivity, emotional roller coaster, overwhelmed, depleted
<b>Behavioural</b>	Clingy, impatient, irritable, withdrawn, moody, regression, sleep disturbances, appetite changes, nightmares, hypervigilance, elevated startle response, use of negative coping, accident proneness, self-harm behaviours
<b>Spiritual</b>	Questioning the meaning of life, loss of purpose, lack of self-satisfaction, pervasive hopelessness, ennui, anger at God, questioning of prior religious beliefs
<b>Interpersonal</b>	Withdrawn, ↓ interest in intimacy or sex, mistrust, isolation from friends, impact on parenting (protectiveness, concern re. aggression), projection of anger or blame, loneliness
<b>Physical</b>	Shock, sweating, ↑ heart rate, breathing difficulties, somatic reactions, aches and pains, dizziness, impaired immune system

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51

## Professional Impact of Vicarious Trauma

Yassen, 1995

<b>Job Tasks</b>	↓ in quality & quantity, low motivation, avoidance of job tasks, ↑ in mistakes, setting perfectionist standards, obsession about detail
<b>Morale</b>	↓ in confidence, loss of interest, dissatisfaction, negative attitude, apathy, demoralization, lack of appreciation, detachment, feelings of incompleteness
<b>Interpersonal</b>	Withdrawal from colleagues, impatience, ↓ in quality of relationship, poor communication, subsume own needs, staff conflicts
<b>Behavioural</b>	Absenteeism, exhaustion, faulty judgment, irritability, tardiness, irresponsibility, overwork, frequent job changes

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52

## Healthy Stress



- Good concentration, motivation & energy
- High quality of work
  - good attendance; deadlines met
- Cooperative behaviour; cheerful manner
- Effective problem solving
- Clear & confident decision making
- Concern & care for others and self
- Constructive criticism given and rec'd

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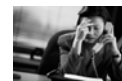
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## Unhealthy Stress



- The opposite of all of the previous +
  - Regularly working late
  - Constantly taking work home
  - Lower standards accepted
  - Overly self-critical
  - No sense of humour, easily disgruntled
  - Extreme mood swings
  - Greater use of alcohol, caffeine, nicotine



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## Vicarious Trauma

### A CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER

Organizational and Personal strategies

- |                 |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Self-care       | Immediate Support |
| Self-reflection | Debriefing        |
| Integrity       | Healthy balance   |

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## ABCs

- Awareness
- Balance
- Connection



*Consider the 3 realms of your life  
professional, organizational, personal*

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## Creative Selfishness

- Behaviour that allows you to care for yourself without feeling guilty
- Taking time to live your life with respect for yourself.
- Self-nurturing activities

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## To Review...

We have talked about ...

1. the consequences of woman abuse
2. the role of health care providers
3. strategies to become part of an integrated response to woman abuse
4. taking care of yourself

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*Remember, asking about abuse*

**gives women a strong message that:**

there are serious health effects of woman abuse to both women and children

HCPs recognize that woman abuse is a serious personal and societal issue, and

health care providers are prepared to help.

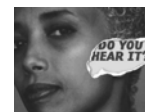
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**"I refuse to remain silent about violence against women because it is about power and prejudice... above all it is about the absence of political will."**

Irene Khan, Amnesty International



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60