

## Section 5

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence is one of the major, serious public health problems affecting families in America and globally.<sup>48-51</sup> Domestic violence, child abuse and elder abuse are all included in the broader category of family violence.<sup>49</sup> Most definitions of domestic violence (a.k.a. intimate partner abuse (IPA), intimate partner violence (IPV)) include the following components:

1. ongoing pattern of intentional violent or assaultive or coercive behaviors or tactics.<sup>48, 51-58</sup>
2. purposeful tactics or behaviors directed at achieving and maintaining power, compliance or control over the victim,<sup>51,52,57</sup> thereby denying their individual and civil rights.<sup>56</sup>
3. may include any or all of the following:

Physical abuse:<sup>48-57</sup>

- injuries of a non-accidental or unexplained nature including shaking, slapping, hitting, kicking, punching, choking, biting, throwing, use of conventional and household objects as weapons;<sup>52</sup>
- injuries commonly targeted to proximal areas so they remain concealed;<sup>52</sup>
- denial of medical attention, physical needs (food, water, shelter, sleep), access or use of contraceptives or other safe sex techniques;<sup>52</sup>
- restraint or not allowing victim to leave their room or home;<sup>52</sup>
- murder.<sup>52,54-57</sup>

Sexual abuse:<sup>48-53,56,57</sup>

- rape;<sup>52</sup>
- making sexual jokes or comments intended to humiliate or demean;<sup>52</sup>
- forcing any person to watch pornography or others having sexual contact, or participating in prostitution or pornography.<sup>52</sup>

Emotional or psychological abuse:<sup>48,50-54,57</sup>

- social isolation or deprivation;<sup>48, 52, 53, 57</sup>
- verbal abuse or intimidation and threats;<sup>48,52,53,56,57</sup>
- control by isolation from family and friends;<sup>52-54,57</sup>
- techniques of coercion or brainwashing designed to use children against a partner; e.g. threatening to take or hurt the children, using children to continue contact through custody or visitation.<sup>52</sup>

Economic coercion or control:<sup>48,51,52,54,57</sup>

- in any type of relationship: adult, adolescent, current heterosexual, homosexual including former dating, marriage, and cohabitating.<sup>48,52,53,58</sup>

Domestic violence is a gender-neutral term and universal problem, which cuts across all racial, socioeconomic, national, religious and ethnic boundaries.<sup>48,49, 54,57</sup> The overwhelming majority of victims, 90-95%, are women;<sup>48,49,57</sup> however, expert opinion and initial studies suggest domestic violence among lesbians gay, bisexual and transgender individuals may be comparable to domestic violence perpetrated against heterosexual women.<sup>53</sup> There is no standardization of what constitutes a violent act. This results in conflicting estimates of the number of women and men affected by "violence"<sup>54</sup>. There is paucity of data about domestic violence against men.

## Statistics

The following statistics help to illustrate the pervasiveness of violence against women:

- estimates of incidents of violence to women range from 1-12 million/year<sup>48</sup> but the most commonly reported incidence rate is 2-4 million/year; <sup>48,51, 54,57</sup>
- prevalence ranges from 20-54% of women experiencing violence in a relationship or lifetime; <sup>48,52-54,56,57</sup>
- battering is the single greatest cause of injury to women; <sup>48</sup>
- 30-75% of women killed in the U.S. are murdered by a domestic partner; <sup>48,55</sup>
- 1 in 10 women are in a violent relationship at any given time; <sup>48</sup>
- 75% of spousal assaults occur at the time of separation or divorce; <sup>55</sup>
- violence tends to be repetitive and averages six violent episodes/year; <sup>49</sup>
- 4-24% of pregnant women are physically assaulted; <sup>48, 51, 53, 57</sup>
- abuse of women and children occurs concurrently an estimated 30-70% of the time; <sup>54,57</sup>

While these statistics are useful to illustrate the magnitude of the problem, they are only estimates. Many cases of domestic violence are unreported or undetected so the true incidence is unknown. <sup>48-50,54</sup>

The toll of domestic violence is enormous. <sup>49,51</sup> It is estimated that 1.8 billion dollars per year are spent directly on health care for victims. <sup>51</sup> In addition to the healthcare cost, there is a high societal cost. <sup>49</sup> Boys who are reared in violent homes have an increased risk of becoming abusers <sup>51</sup> and girls who witness or experience violence have an increased risk of becoming victims. <sup>48,51</sup> Children who live in violent homes have higher rates of learning difficulties, decreased academic performance, increased behavioral problems and are more likely to be violent adults. <sup>57</sup>

Chiropractors have the opportunity to play an important role in shaping societal values by naming the disease, domestic violence. <sup>56</sup> This is a primary responsibility and may allow the survivor to begin seeing his/her situation differently, giving them the opportunity to start taking control of their lives. <sup>56</sup> The public may come to understand that domestic violence is unacceptable behavior when physicians make it clear that it's important to ask whether an intimate or formerly intimate partner caused injuries. <sup>56</sup> If the root cause of an incomplete diagnosis, prescription for medication, recurrence of injury, or stress related injuries is domestic violence, the practitioner has the opportunity to protect the patient from escalating risk by addressing this issue. <sup>56</sup> If the practitioner recognizes and helps a victim with "minor" signs or symptoms of domestic violence, a serious or even fatal episode could be prevented. <sup>56</sup>

**For practice tips for identifying and treating the abused patient see Appendix B**