

# BUSINESS WIRE

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## **American Journal of Nursing Calls on Nurses to Increase Safety-Promoting Behaviors of Abused Women; First Randomized Clinical Trial in Nurse Safety Intervention**

(New York) – Despite the United States Department of Health & Human Services directive to decrease intimate-partner violence by 20% by the year 2010, few assessment and intervention guidelines have been evaluated in controlled studies. The American Journal of Nursing's (AJN) March issue presents research that substantiates techniques nurses can use to help abused women adopt behaviors that may keep them safe from future attacks from their partners. The study titled, "Increasing the Safety-Promoting Behaviors of Abused Women," by Judith McFarlane, DrPH, RN, FAAN, Parry Chair in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention and Professor of Nursing, Texas Woman's University, and colleagues, evaluates a telephone intervention for victims of intimate-partner violence.

The seven-nurse study team found that significantly more women in the intervention group reported adopting safety behaviors than did those in the control group 18 months after the intervention. This study is believed to be the first randomized clinical trial of a safety intervention for abused women.

"The problem of partner abuse is so significant that Health People 2010, the report of the US Department of Health and Human Services, has specified a 20 percent reduction in the occurrence of intimate-partner abuse as a national health objective to be achieved by 2010," said Dr. McFarlane. "Nurses are on the frontlines of identification and intervention and will now have the information tools and guidelines to engage one of the nation's significant health challenges."

The peer-reviewed article and AJN editorial call on nurses in various settings to review with patients the Safety-Promoting Behavior Checklist included in the study, thereby possibly averting trauma and subsequent health care costs. The checklist is made available in English and Spanish to encourage immediate and wide action.

Each year, one million women in the United States report being physically abused by their intimate partners, yet few assessment and intervention protocols have been evaluated in controlled studies. To test a telephone intervention intended to increase the "safety-promoting behavior" of abused women, 75 women received six telephone calls over a period of eight weeks in which safety-promoting behaviors were discussed. A

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control group of 75 women received usual care. Women in both groups received follow-up calls to assess safety-promoting behaviors at three, six, 12 and 18 months after intake. Analysis showed that the women in the intervention group practiced significantly (P less than 0.01) more safety-promoting behaviors than women in the control group at each assessment.

The findings of this study demonstrate that an intervention to increase safety behaviors of abused women is highly effective when offered following an abusive incident. “Nurses are in a position to conduct routine abuse assessments and review and increase the practice of safety behavior strategies,” said Diana Mason, RN, PhD, FAAN editor in chief of the American Journal of Nursing. “Many abused women do not know effective ways to protect themselves. The “Safety Behavior Checklist” provides nurses and the public with strategies that can be suggested for any abused women or man to keep them and their children safe.”

Safety-promoting behaviors include:

- Hiding money and extra clothing
- Removing weapons from the house
- Making an extra set of keys for your house and car
- Establishing a code with family and friends to signal a need for assistance
- Asking neighbors to call police if violence begins

Founded in 1900, The American Journal of Nursing is the official publication of the American Nurses Association and the largest and oldest circulating nursing journal in the world. It is published by Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, a unit of Wolters Kluwer International Health & Science (WKIHS), which is a group of leading publishing companies offering specialized publications and software in medicine, nursing, pharmacy, science, and related areas. WKIHS also includes Ovid Technologies, Facts and Comparisons, Adis International, and Kluwer Academic Publishing.

An electronic, full-text version of the study is available at [www.NursingCenter.com](http://www.NursingCenter.com) the official web site of AJN.

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