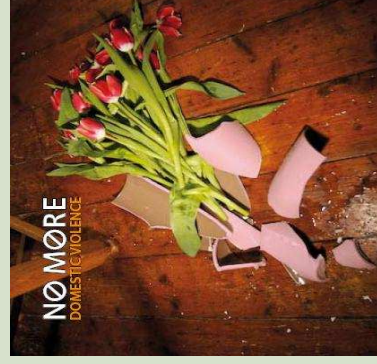


## Help Stop Domestic Violence

- Make domestic violence screening a routine part of every patient encounter
- 81% of survivors of domestic violence report wanting their healthcare providers to ask them about potential abuse<sup>2</sup>
- Mandatory Reporting of Abuse: if victim is over 65, a vulnerable adult, or a child under 18 or for victims aged 18-65, if the victim sustains a life-threatening injury at the hands of their abuser<sup>2</sup>
- "How comfortable I feel telling someone my story and reaching out to them for help depends on their persona and how much they seem to care. I don't want to be someone's midnight coffee joke." - Female, aged 42
- "When I breezed over how things were at home I wish the doctor had followed up with questions because I was too ashamed to bring it up." - Female, aged 30



## Resources

- FUNDING CREDIT/AVDA US Preventative Services Task Force
- <sup>1</sup> Meichenbaum, Donald, and Suzanne Keeley. "Domestic Violence and Doctor's Response." *Miami Medicine* (Mar. 2004): 7-11. [www.melissainstitute.org/documents/miamimedicine.pdf](http://www.melissainstitute.org/documents/miamimedicine.pdf).
- <sup>2</sup> Rey, Jennifer. "Violence in the Home - Domestic Violence." *Aid to Victims of Domestic Violence*. Biomedical Science Building, FAU. 8 Oct. 2008.
- <sup>3</sup> "Preventing Domestic Violence: Clinical Guidelines on Routine Screening." 1999. Family Violence Prevention Fund. 5 Dec. 2008 <<http://endabuse.org>>.
- Domestic Violence Services Directory—[www.islington.gov.uk](http://www.islington.gov.uk)
- Wilco.org
- Catalogue for Philanthropy

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# Domestic Violence Screening for Healthcare Providers

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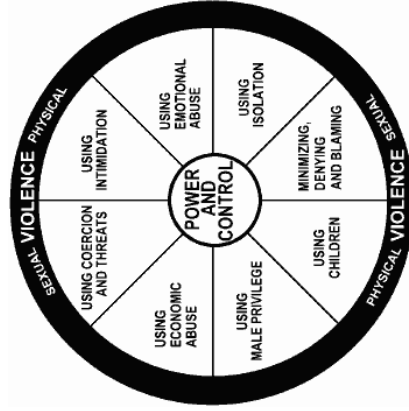
Aid to Victims of  
Domestic Abuse  
Fall 2008

## Domestic Violence Effects...

- One in three women will experience physical or sexual abuse in an intimate relationship at some point in their lives<sup>2</sup>
- 1.6 million women in the US are abused by their intimate partner<sup>1</sup>
- Doctors in all fields of practice will have patients that experience domestic violence<sup>1</sup>
- 20-35% of women ER visits are due to domestic violence altercations<sup>1</sup>
- In ambulatory internal medicine clinics 14% of patients have abuse-related problems<sup>1</sup>
- 50% of female psychiatric patients have a history of victimization<sup>1</sup>
- 15% of all pregnant women experience domestic violence during the pregnancy<sup>1</sup>
- Domestic violence and child abuse/neglect occur simultaneously in 40-70% of cases<sup>1</sup>

## RED FLAGS of ABUSE

- Overly protective or controlling partner and/or unwillingness to speak in front of partner
- Multiple or unexplained injuries
- Injuries during pregnancy
- History inconsistent with injuries
- Vague complaints



## Domestic Violence Screening

- The medical community identifies only 2-10% of victims of domestic violence<sup>1</sup>
- Physicians fail to identify victims due to lack of awareness of how widespread the problem is, lack of proper screening training, the mistaken belief that it's not their role to get involved, and fear that interfering will escalate violence in the abuser<sup>1</sup>
- The American Medical Association, American Nurses Association, and the American Psychological Association recommend routine screening<sup>3</sup>
- *In addition, 81% of domestic abuse survivors reported wanting their healthcare provider to ask them about potential abuse<sup>2</sup>*

## Routine screening recommended for all women over 14 by PCP, OB/GYN, ER, and Mental Health physicians.

- Integrate domestic violence screening in EVERY patient encounter
- Introduce the topic as a routine screening for all patients: "I don't know if this is a problem for you, but many of the women I see as patients are dealing with abusive relationships. Some are too afraid or uncomfortable to bring it up themselves, so I've started asking about it routinely."<sup>3</sup>
- Follow up with **direct questions**: Are you currently, or have you ever been in a relationship where you were physically hurt, threatened, or made to feel afraid? Do you feel controlled or isolated by your partner? Have you ever been raped or forced into sexual activity against your will?<sup>3</sup>



## Responding to Disclosure

### Mandatory Reporting of Abuse

- FL Statutes 39.201, 415.1034 require reporting knowledge or reasonable suspicion of child and elder/vulnerable adult abuse respectively. Please refer to the statutes for more detailed information.<sup>2</sup>
- FL Statute 790.24 requires reporting of gun shot wounds or life threatening injuries to the sheriff's department of the county treatment is administered.<sup>2</sup>
- Reporting abuse that is not mandated by statute does not respect the autonomy of the survivor and may deter them from seeking future medical care. In these cases, it is best to offer resources, referrals and safety information to the survivor.<sup>2</sup>

### Plan of Action

- Assess immediate risk of danger for the victim
- Give supportive and/or validating messages
- Help victim form a safety plan, i.e. call 911, run to a room with an escape door, have a pre-packed bag/money available, call local domestic violence center
- Make referrals to local community resources. **AVOID** handing out domestic violence brochures as it may be discovered by the abuser. **Instead**, write down phone number on an unmarked sheet of paper.
- Offer a confidential office with phone for the victim to call the hotline.

### For More Information...

#### **Palm Beach County**

- AVDA Hotline (800) 355-8547
- YWCA Harmony House (561) 640-9844

#### **State of Florida**

- Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence (800) 500-1119

#### **National Level**

- National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (800) 799-SAFE