


# Florida Department of Health and Human Services

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# Intimate Partner Violence: What Can I DO?

ACOI Annual Convention  
14 October 2017  
Michelle R. Mendez, DO

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# OVERVIEW

- The story of M&T
- Domestic Violence as a Medical Diagnosis
- Fatality Report Statistics
- The Role of the Physician
- Identifying Victims
- Where to get help

# The Story of M&T

- Ugly Divorce Pending (Aren't they all)
- Middle Class Professionals
- DINKS
- Police Involvement

# Florida Law

- “Any assault, aggravated assault, battery, aggravated battery, sexual assault, sexual battery, stalking, aggravated stalking, kidnapping, false imprisonment, or any criminal offense resulting in physical injury or death of one family or household member by another who is or was residing in the same single dwelling unit.”

# What is Intimate Partner Violence?

- 1 in every 4 women will experience in their lifetime
- Not only Heterosexual Married Couples
- 15% of victims are men
- 1/3 of female homicide victims killed by an intimate partner
- < 1/5 seek medical care following injury
- No Socioeconomic boundaries
- Economic hard times

# Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team Annual Report

- DV accounted for 192 (20%) of 881 murders
- Spouse/live-in victim in 54%
- Children 7% of victims
- 153,198 protection orders in FDLE
- Prior threats to kill in 29% of cases
- Previous reporting in 35%

# Fatality Report Statistics

- DV crimes down 1.5%, all other crimes down more
- Stalking up 65.1%
- > 116,000 arrests
- 192 deaths / 2010 - 210
- 47% by GSW
- 25% - 911 called during attack
- 33% perps unemployed
- 44% perps w known substance abuse



# More Statistics – FATALITY Report

- 28% diagnosed mental health issues
- 46% spouses
- Avg length of relationship – 11.86 yrs
- 59% perps attempted /committed suicide
- 28% active “DO NOT CONTACT “ orders
- 16% collateral victims
- Only 11% had victim services support contact

# Task Force Report Recommendations

- All related to social services or law enforcement
- No recommendations or acknowledgement of Medicine's involvement in DV except in case of Substance Abuse or Mental Health

# Economic Impact

- 18.5 Million mental health care visits each year
- \$ 5.8 Billion each year – \$ 4.1 Billion for direct medical and mental health services, \$ 2.2 million spent in medically treated injuries
- 8 Million lost paid work days equivalent to 32,000 full time jobs



What are the 2 Key  
Elements underlying  
Domestic Violence?



# **POWER AND CONTROL**

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# Common tactics offenders use to control their victims, law enforcement and others

- use of children to control the victim—accuses victim of being a bad parent; threatens violence against the children; uses visitation to harass
- use of repeated threats to control behavior- the threat alone becomes controlling
- use of threats to commit suicide and tells victim that he or she will be responsible
- treating partner as a servant and making the decisions in the relationship
- use of intimidation by instilling fear through looks, gestures and actions—smashing objects, destroying property
- use of drugs and/or alcohol
- physical violence
- sexual abuse
- economic abuse

# Christy & Craig

- Army Corps of Engineers
- 3 Daughters
- Small Business Owner
- Self Medicates



# Protection Orders aka Restraining orders

- Approximately 20% annually obtain civil protection orders
- $\frac{1}{2}$  of physical assault orders are violated
- $> \frac{2}{3}$  of orders issued secondary to rape or stalking are violated

# Laura & Paul

- “Successful”
- Twin Boys
- Pediatrician visit
- Tennis

# Children and Domestic Violence

- Witnessing violence is strongest risk factor for transmission to future generations
- Boys who witnessed DV *TWICE* as likely to abuse
- 30 – 60 % *also abuse children in the household – REQUIRED REPORTING*

# Mandatory Cute Kid Picture



# The Ethical Role of the Physician

- Not just Family Physicians and OB/GYNs
- Emergency Physicians, Specialists because often safer (not caring for perpetrator)
- We are patient advocates – sometimes their only one
- Validate patient's feeling
- Support patient's right not to be harmed
- Acknowledge potential for further harm
- Patient Confidentiality

# The Legal Role of the Physician

- NO DV reporting laws unless injury
- Failure to report Child or Elder abuse – 2nd degree misdemeanor
- Life threatening injuries indicating violence – especially gunshot must report to local sheriff
- Reporting (require)/ recommend Written Consent
- Female trauma patients – 16-30% WILL admit battery when asked directly

# Reporting Rates

- 1/4 of all physical assaults
- 1/5 of all rapes
- 1/2 of all stalkings

Against females by intimate partners are reported to police.

# Clinical Clues to Domestic Abuse

- Acute Injury Pattern
  - cuts, burns, bruises, fracture, concussion, miscarriage (especially if multiple or in combination)
  - Injury to central regions of the body (e.g., face, chest, breast, abdomen)



# Clinical Clues to Battered Person's Syndrome

- Psychological / Emotional Indicators
  - Excessive Somatization (headaches, fatigue, insomnia, digestive complaints)
  - Exaggerated guilt, anxiety, fear, apathy
  - Symptoms of an agitated depression
  - Economic / Social Isolation
  - Constant need for approval from the Significant Other

# Pregnancy Statistics

- 154/1000 assaulted in first four months
- 170/1000 during fifth through ninth month
- 8 % of all obstetric patients physically abused
- Unintended pregnancies - 2.5X risk vs. intended

# The Police's role in Domestic Violence

- Assault vs. Battery
- Aggravated vs. Simple
- Safeguarding potential victims
- Preventing Deaths
- 2001 Gov. Bush signed The Family Protection Act - 5 day mandatory jail time for deliberate injury
- Doctors are not investigators

WRITE THIS DOWN (or put it in  
your iphone/Samsung/tablet)

## National Domestic Violence Hotline

- 1-800-799-7233
- 170\_languages – immediate connection to  
local\_service\_provider

Florida 24 hour DV hotline:

1800-500-1119

# National Resources

- National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

- [www.ncadv.org](http://www.ncadv.org)

- Supports policies and legislation to protect victims and survivors

- National Council Against Sexual Violence provides local training, technical assistance, and education to improve services for victims

# Loveisrespect

- National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline
- 24 hour national Web-based and telephone resource
- Text feature & live chat option
- Helps teens and young adults
- 1-866-331-9474
- [www.JenniferAnn.org](http://www.JenniferAnn.org) has educational cards available



Wish for all of our  
Patients

Disney Dream Cruise Christmas  
2011