

Addressing Past Sexual Assault in Clinical Settings



Core Competencies:

1. Understand the physical, psychological and social impacts of sexual assault
2. Know how to create an environment that supports disclosure of a past sexual assault
3. Provide an appropriate response to women who disclose a past sexual assault
4. Foster interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches to minimize structural challenges (e.g. organizational commitment, time, and training)

Responding to Domestic Violence in Clinical Settings

1. Identification	
1.1	Define violence against women within the context of an intimate relationship
1.2	a) Describe the prevalence of intimate partner abuse in women b) Describe the prevalence of intimate partner abuse in pregnant women
1.3	a) Identify health effects of intimate partner abuse b) Identify health effects of intimate partner abuse in the pregnant woman, her fetus and/or infant
1.4	Describe: a) The dynamics of an abusive relationship b) Barriers women face in leaving c) Characteristics of abusive men
1.5	List presentations of abused women (includes injury pattern, behaviours, medical presentations, indicators of strangulation, vague complaints and emotional affect)
1.6	Discuss the effects of culture, geography, home environment, disability and sexual orientation on presentations
1.7	a) Identify those patients that may be at high risk of abuse (include pregnancy, partner's behaviour, etc.) b) Identify those patients/individuals at high risk of using abusive behaviours
1.8	Identify patient-related barriers to disclosure (include concerns about privacy, confidentiality, cultural/ethnic/religious beliefs, resource availability etc)
1.9	Acknowledge pre-existing values, attitudes, beliefs and experiences related to abuse among Health Care professionals and how these impact on the interaction with the patient
1.1	a) Explain issues that contribute to a lack of safety in identifying abused women in health care settings b) Identify factors that contribute to a safe environment for identifying abused women c) Describe how to create a safe environment enabling women to disclose abuse
1.11	Communicate with patients in a supportive, nonjudgmental manner

1.12	a) Demonstrate appropriate ways of asking about, or screening women for, intimate partner abuse b) Demonstrate appropriate ways of asking, or assessing men for, abusive behaviour
1.13	Identify factors that make pregnancy a vulnerable time for women
1.14	Describe health consequences/issues specific to the postpartum period (i.e. depression, maternal-infant attachment, breastfeeding)
2. Assessment and Intervention	
2.1	Communicate appropriate responses to disclosure, nondisclosure, and indicators of abuse despite nondisclosure
2.2	Acknowledge the patient's response in a non-judgmental, supportive manner
2.3	a) Describe legal obligations upon disclosure of abuse b) Describe reporting obligations regarding children c) Communicate with the patient regarding reporting issues (woman and her children) in a clear and supportive manner
2.4	Discuss repercussions of disclosure for the women and her children
2.5	a) Identify available local hospital, community, regional and provincial resources for abused women and abusive men and how to access them b) Review with patient available options c) Value and respect a woman's rights to make her own decisions d) Communicate information to the woman that supports her decision making e) Offer appropriate referrals
2.6	Identify high risk situations for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continued abuse • medical morbidity/mortality including suicide • homicide
2.7	a) Perform a focused assessment of her immediate risk/safety b) Perform an assessment of his immediate risk for perpetration of abuse, femicide or femicide/suicide c) Distinguish among hospital and/or community resources to be called upon in the event of immediate risk to her safety
2.8	Perform appropriate documentation of patient's history, physical findings, working assessment/diagnoses, follow up arrangements

Making Connections

I. Have a basic understanding of each of the following: Domestic Violence (DV), mental health and substance use

II. Understand the relationships among DV, mental health, & substance use

- a. Recognize the potential consequences of childhood trauma on women and their partners
- b. Understand the multiple effects of DV on women (e.g. mental and physical health, financial status, parenting, substance use and other social determinants of health)
- c. Understand the ways substances may be used by women who experience or have experienced DV

III. Recognize that different professional bodies draw upon their own historical beliefs, frameworks, and practices to understand and provide care

- a. Be familiar with the languages used in each of these frameworks
- b. Acknowledge the strengths and limitations of these frameworks including how they inform treatment or care

IV. Know what is required to keep her (and her children) safe and healthy: immediately, short-term, long-term

Assess for:

- a. Risk for future DV victimization including femicide, or suicidality
- b. Risk for perpetration of DV, including homicide/femicide, and suicide
- c. Substance use and withdrawal
- d. Co-occurring issues of DV, mental health and substance use
- e. Involvement with legal system
- f. Child protection risks

Manage:

- g. Crises
- h. Interventions including working with her to determine and set priorities
- i. Referrals

Complete:

- j. Safety plan(s) as appropriate
- k. Complete child protection report as required

V. Identify and know how to access local community, regional and provincial resources for women who experience DV, mental health and substance use problems

- a. Know how to effectively work together
- b. Understand different roles, responsibilities and frameworks used by practitioners she may encounter when accessing other services
- c. Work to improve networks of care for those who experience co-occurring problems

VI. Understand the ways in which DV, mental health and/or substance use may affect relationships including those with intimate partners, parent/child dynamics, family & community and therapeutic/counselling relationship

VII. Demonstrate appropriate verbal and nonverbal communication skills

VIII. Recognize the pros, cons and potential unintended consequences of disclosure (of DV, mental health and substance use), documentation, and treatment for women

IX. Understand how other social determinants (e.g. race, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, citizenship status, age, geographic location, etc.) may interact with DV, mental health and substance use

X. Engage in reflective practice

a. Acknowledge your own values, attitudes, beliefs and experiences

b. Understand vicarious trauma/compassion fatigue/secondary trauma and practitioner burnout, be mindful

of how these impact your practice and practice healthy self-care

c. Commit to continuous learning in all three sectors