

PHYSICAL INJURY AND MEDICAL TREATMENT

Victims of domestic violence often require medical care, although they may conceal the cause of their injuries.

- Domestic abuse usually escalates, producing increasingly severe injuries over time. This means that battered women are likely to see physicians frequently.

Children's Safety Network, Domestic Violence: A Directory of Protocols for Health Care Providers (1992) p. (I).

- Battered women comprise 20 - 30% of ambulatory care patients, but only 1 in 20 is correctly identified as such by medical practitioners.

Hyman et al., Laws Mandating Reporting of Domestic Violence: Do They Promote Patient Well-Being?, Journal of the American Medical Association, vol. 273, no. 22, 1781 (June 1995).

- One study found that less than 3% of women visiting emergency rooms disclosed or were asked about domestic violence by a nurse or physician.

Abbott et al., Domestic Violence Against Women: Incidence and Prevalence in an Emergency Department Population, Journal of the American Medical Association, vol. 273, no. 22, 1763, 1765 (June 1995).

- When medical practitioners use emergency room protocols for identifying and treating victims, their ability to identify victims of domestic violence increases from 5.6% to 30%.

Children's Safety Network, Domestic Violence: A Directory of Protocols for Health Care Providers (1992) p. (I).

- 17% of those who visit emergency rooms for treatment are documented as having come as a result of being injured by an intimate.

Bureau of Justice Statistics: Violence-Related Injuries Treated in Hospital Emergency Departments (NCJ-156921), August 1997. p. 5.

Health care providers are sometimes the only outsiders victims of domestic abuse see or talk to privately. The health care provider may be the victim's only bridge to life-saving information and resources.

Be a Life Saver: Ask a Safety Question.

Make it a standard part of your practice.