

Interpersonal Violence in the Native Community

Stephanie Eklund, MD, FACOG

OB/Gyn physician, Southcentral Foundation
Medical Director, Anchorage FNSP Program
(formerly SART)

September 22-23, 2008

Definition of Interpersonal Violence (IPV)

Violence between people – including domestic violence, spousal abuse, and sexual assault.

Lifetime Impact of IPV

- Arthritis
- Chronic neck or back pain
- Headaches
- Sexually transmitted infections
- Chronic pelvic pain
- IBS and other GI complaints
- National Consensus Guidelines on Identifying and Responding to Domestic Violence Victimization in Healthcare Settings, The Family Violence Prevention Fund, September, 2002. www.endabuse.org/health
- Pregnancy complications
- Suicide
- Substance abuse
- Depression/anxiety
- Exacerbation of other medical issues
- Fewer preventive healthcare measures

Impact on children in the home

- Increased risk of child abuse
 - Increased levels of child neglect
 - Increased risk of sexual abuse
-
- Hallie Bongar White and Jane Larrington: Intersection of Domestic Violence and Child Victimization in Indian Country, 2005 Southwest Center for Law and Policy and Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice.

Barriers to disclosure:

- Fear of reprisal
- Shame/humiliation
- Denial
- Fear of not being believed
- Remote location
- Fear of losing children
- Cultural stigma
- Self-blame
- Mistrust of the “system”
- Down-playing the situation
- Emotional attachment

Scope of the problem: US statistics

- Nearly 25% of women and 7.6% of men are affected by IPV at some point in their lives
- 1.3 million women and 835,000 men are physically assaulted by an intimate partner annually
- In 2000, 1,247 women and 440 men were killed by an intimate partner
- 33% of female murder victims are killed by an intimate partner
- Patricia Tjaden & Nancy Thoennes, US Dep't of Just., NCJ 181867, Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence, at iii (2000)
- Callie Marie Rennison, US Dep't of Just., NCJ 197838, Bureau of Justice Statistics Crime Data Brief: Intimate Partner Violence, 1993-2001, at 1 (2003)

IPV in the Native Community

- 1:3 Native women will be raped or sexually assaulted compared with less than 1:5 US women overall
- Native women are 2.5 times more likely to be raped than other US women
- Maze of Injustice: The failure to protect Indigenous women from sexual violence in the USA, Amnesty International Report, April, 2007

Amnesty International, 2007

- Listed many factors that lead to increased sexual violence against indigenous women:
 - Jurisdiction issues
 - Prejudice/stereotyping
 - Decreased response to reports of violence
 - Under-staffed law enforcement agencies
 - Perception that the woman is to blame
 - Cultural differences in communication
- Maze of Injustice: The failure to protect Indigenous women from sexual violence in the USA, Amnesty International report, April, 2007. Available at: <http://web.amnesty.org>

Amnesty International, con't

- Additional barriers to care after a sexual assault:
 - Limited resources/training in healthcare facilities
 - Payment issues
 - Funding of programs
 - Misunderstanding of procedures and requirements
 - Inadequate mental health follow-up
 - Maze of Injustice: The failure to protect Indigenous women from sexual violence in the USA, Amnesty International Report, April, 2007

PRAMS study

- Alaska Native women reported a 7.6% rate of physical abuse by her husband or partner during pregnancy, compared to a 5.2% rate overall and a 1.0% rate reported by white respondents.

- PRAMS 2002 Surveillance Report, p. 190, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 16000 Clifton Rd, Atlanta, GA 30333. Available at www.cdc.gov/PRAMS.

Sexual Assault Rates in Anchorage, AK

- Over an 8 year period (1996-2004), 52% of patients seen by the SART program in Anchorage were Alaska Native (total number 712/1371).
- 25% of the suspects were Native
- 81% of victims were assaulted by non-strangers

- Rosay, Andre and Henry, Tara: Descriptive Analysis of Sexual Assault Nurse Examinations in Anchorage: 1996-2004, January, 2007. Supported by the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, US Department of Justice.

Southwest Center for Law and Policy

- For Native American victims of violence, the offender was slightly more likely to be a stranger than an intimate partner, family member or acquaintance
- Native Americans described the offender as an acquaintance in 34% of rapes/sexual assaults, and as an intimate partner or family member in 25% of sexual assaults
- Southwest Ctr. For Law and Policy, Statistics (2005), at <http://www.swclap.org/statistics.htm>

Barriers to disclosure

- Economic
- Physical
- Emotional
- Social
- Cultural
- Distance

Asking about IPV

- Relationship is important
- Patience is crucial
- Culturally sensitive
- Non-judgmental
- Timing

Lethality Risk

- Time of separation
- Obsession
- Depression or other Mental Illness
- Extended history of DV
- Escalation of violence
- Pregnancy
- Threats or fantasies of homicide or suicide
- Weapons, especially guns

Stalking

Rage or anti-social behavior

Drugs and alcohol

Violence in his family of origin

Cruelty to animals

Living with children who are not his own

Unemployment

Hallie Bongar White and James G. White: Testifying about Lethality Risk Factors, 2005 Southwest Center for Law and Policy and Office on Violence against Women, JS Department of Justice.

Responding to disclosure

- Know what/who is available in your facility and community
- Recognize the patient's autonomy
- Maintain confidentiality!!
- Remember that it takes time to make a change

Future changes

- As of 2009, we will offer anonymous testing to victims of sexual assault
- National Institutes of Justice will attempt to survey Native communities throughout the country
- Further response to Amnesty International's report nationwide

Available resources

National Domestic Violence Hotline:

1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

AWAIC (Abused Women's Aid in Crisis):

274-6882

STAR (Standing Together Against Rape)

276-7273

Alaska Women's Resource Center

276-0528

Family Wellness Warriors (FWWI)

729-5440, 1-866-729-FWWI(3994)

Behind each number is a name

Linda, Kathy, Stephanie, Frederica, Carla, Edith, Tammy, Janet, Lynette, Gwen, Mary, Eleanor, Feral, Sally, Angela, Tanya, Ginger, Edna, Heather, Michelle, Terry, Nicole, Amy, Lois, Kristen, Sarah, Jennifer, Claudette, Shelly, Karen, Deborah, Ellen, Cindy, Madison, Rebecca, Brittany, Hillary, Nita, Misty, Thelma, Julie, Claudia, Vicki, Jan, Carolann, Patricia

**Nobody ever deserves to be
harmed by someone they love.**

Nobody, ever.

