

# Women's Health Research IN FOCUS

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

### VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN DEFINED

Violence against women includes intimate partner violence, sexual assault and rape, stalking, sexual harassment, and trafficking. In the United States, violence against women has declined over the past 20 years, but it is still a significant and wide-spread health risk affecting women of all ages.<sup>1</sup> According to 2010 data, approximately one in five women have been raped, one in six women have been stalked, and one in three women have experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetimes.<sup>2</sup> The rate of rape involving alcohol or drugs is increasing<sup>3</sup> and health consequences may have devastating long-term effects. Although men and boys also can be victimized by violence, women and girls are disproportionately affected by it.<sup>4</sup> Violence against women continues to be a problem worldwide. Thirty-five percent of women worldwide reported being raped or physically abused according to a 2013 World Health Organization report.<sup>5</sup>

*Health care providers and advocates are increasingly recognizing that all forms of domestic violence can have devastating physical and emotional health effects*



### HEALTH EFFECTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women significantly affects women's physical and psychological health. In addition to immediate injuries from the assault, battered women may suffer from chronic pain, gastrointestinal disorders, psychosomatic symptoms, and eating disorders. Psychological abuse is often considered less severe than physical violence. However, health care providers and advocates around the world are increasingly recognizing that all forms of domestic violence can have devastating physical and emotional health effects. Violence against women is associated with mental health problems such as anxiety,

post-traumatic stress disorder, and depression. Women who are abused suffer an increased risk of unplanned or early pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. As trauma victims, they are also at an increased risk of substance abuse. According to a U.S. study, women who experience intimate partner abuse are three times more likely to have gynecological problems than non-abused women.

### REFERENCES

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4. Breiding MJ, Black MC, Ryan GW. Chronic disease and health risk behaviors associated with intimate partner violence-18 U.S. states/territories, 2005. *Ann Epidemiol*. Jul 2008;18(7):538-544.
5. Global and Regional Estimates of Violence against Women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and nonpartner sexual violence. World Health Organization, ISBN 978 92 4 156462 5 (NLM classification: HV 6625) World Health Organization 2013. <http://apps.who.int>

## FEDERAL PROGRAMS ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

### DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS)

The HHS Office on Women's Health leads Project Connect, which links research, policy, and practice to prevent domestic and sexual violence across the nation. HHS also works with professional health and social service agencies to provide expertise to the National Advisory Committee on Violence against Women. Other HHS activities include state grants; conference series and guide for individuals who work with survivors of violence; projects within the U.S. Department of Justice; and home visit support for pregnant victims of abuse and families of small children.

### NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH (NIH)

Violence against women is one of the 229 major research areas at NIH (NIH RePORTER).<sup>6</sup> In FY 2012, NIH devoted \$36 million to 105 projects exploring the health effects of violence on victims and also on their families. Projects also included research on violence prevention and intervention strategies. NIH Institutes and Centers (ICs) supporting violence against women research, include the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, the National Institute on Mental Health, and the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. The NIH Office of Research on Women's Health, with support from the NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Science Research, coordinates violence against women research and promotes collaboration among ICs for this research topic. NIH also collaborates with other federal agencies, academic and medical institutions, and nationwide partnerships on violence against women research.

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### ADDITIONAL FEDERAL ACTIVITIES ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) monitors the incidence, prevalence, and costs of partner and sexual violence; conducts research on the factors that increase or decrease the likelihood of perpetrating partner or sexual violence; as well as research on the effectiveness, adoption, and dissemination of partner and sexual violence prevention programs. CDC also strives to strengthen capacity in communities to address partner and sexual violence by helping state and non-governmental partners plan, implement, and evaluate prevention programs.<sup>7, 8</sup>

The Family Violence Prevention and Services Program, in the Administration for Children and Families, administers the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), the primary federal funding stream for shelter and supportive services for victims of domestic violence and their children. FVPSA provides support for Territories and Tribes, state domestic violence coalitions, and culturally specific and special-issue resource centers, including the National Health Resource Center on Domestic Violence, which has trained over 22,000 health professionals on best practices for working with domestic violence survivors.

In 2012, a Presidential Memorandum established the Working Group on the Intersection of HIV/AIDS, Violence Against Women and Girls, and Gender-Related Health Disparities,<sup>9</sup> and the U.S. Department of State released U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally. In 2013, the 1994 Violence Against Women Act, first written by then-Senator Joseph Biden, was strengthened and reauthorized.

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### RESOURCES

- ▶ 2013 Trans-HHS Intimate Partner Violence and Counseling Research Symposium Resources <http://whr.nlm.nih.gov/ipv-symposium.html>
- ▶ HHS Office on Women's Health Violence Against Women Topics <http://www.womenshealth.gov/violence-against-women>
- ▶ Violence Against Women Act [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/vawa\\_factsheet.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/vawa_factsheet.pdf)
- ▶ Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women <http://www.ovv.usdoj.gov>
- ▶ Office of Research on Women's Health Violence Against Women Research <http://orwh.od.nih.gov/resources/policyreports/index.asp>
- ▶ U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally <http://orwh.od.nih.gov/resources/policyreports>
- ▶ Family Violence Prevention and Services Program <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/programs/family-violence-prevention-services/about>
- ▶ National Health Resource Center on Domestic Violence <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/resource/nhrcdv>

### REFERENCES

6. NIH RePORTER [http://www.report.nih.gov/categorical\\_spending\\_project\\_listing.aspx?FY=2012&ARRA=N&DCat=Violence](http://www.report.nih.gov/categorical_spending_project_listing.aspx?FY=2012&ARRA=N&DCat=Violence)
7. <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/rpe/index.html>
8. <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/delta/index.html>
9. Office of the Press Secretary, The White House. Presidential Memorandum--Establishing a Working Group on the Intersection of HIV/AIDS, Violence Against Women and Girl, and Gender-related Health Disparities. 2012. <http://www.whitehouse.gov>. Accessed August 7, 2013.

