



D56 How Women Victims of Intimate Partner Violence are Portrayed in International Medical Journals: A Study of Articles Published Over the Course of a Year

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The goal of this presentation is to encourage practitioners to reconsider how they treat women victims of intimate partner violence, that they might treat such patients with more respect for their autonomy.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by encouraging clinical research in this field and potential research partnerships.

Introduction: Intimate partner violence (IPV) is officially considered to be a 'public health problem' in France as stated in a government report published in 2000. Resources are being coordinated to assist doctors in the assessment, documentation, treatment, and appropriate referral of the women victims concerned.

Objective: To determine how women victims of IPV are represented in the medical discourse.

Method: For the year 2004, referenced publications were studied on Medline selected with the key words 'domestic violence' or 'intimate partner violence'. Only papers focused on heterosexual couples were considered – all other couple groups were excluded. For each paper, the nationality, specialty practice, and bias of each author were evaluated as well as the type of journal each paper was published in.

Results: There were 621,643 referenced publication papers in 2004. The search yielded 1274 references of which 298 were relevant to the study. Thirty countries were represented, with a majority of the articles from the USA. Journals relating to public health, victimology, and gynaecology/obstetrics were the most present. IPV in itself is never defined but is always considered by its consequences or by the risk factors.

The publications concerned in majority the women (only 20 papers concerned the aggressor and 16 papers concerned the couple), treating mainly the epidemiological aspects, socio-demographic data, risk factors, and the consequences for the women's health and that of the children.

The recommended therapeutic attitude always involves invoking judicial procedures.

Discussion: IPV seems to be mainly considered through the demographic data, and the absence is remarkable, in this series of papers at least, of clinical case studies which would allow to better understanding what goes on in the intimacy of violent couples. The woman is considered in isolation, completely passive, and not as part of a couple. No publication distinguishes between forced marriages and freely consented marriages. The woman is presented as fragile, incapable of asserting herself, who requires not only guidance but also, often, assistance.

In France, a debate has begun between those who consider the women as victims and those who have reconsidered this approach.

Conclusion: The medical publications studied give only an unclear image of the women, made up of statistical data, with a tendency to consider women victims of IPV as persons without autonomy, based on more or less relevant psychological data. In the series of papers studied, the lack of serious clinical case studies of persons concerned by IPV is notable. Progress can only come about through a considerable number of well researched case studies

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