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Screening for intimate partner violence proves beneficial

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Photo: U.S. Department of Defense

(HealthDay) -- Screening instruments can be used in the health care setting to accurately identify women who are experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV), with minimal adverse effects, according to a review published online May 7 in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Heidi D. Nelson, M.D., M.P.H., of the Oregon Health & Science University in Portland, and colleagues reviewed new evidence on the effectiveness of screening and interventions for reducing IPV and related health outcomes. In addition, the diagnostic accuracy of screening was assessed and adverse effects of screening and interventions were reviewed for women in health care settings.

The researchers found that, based on a large fair-quality trial, screening for IPV was associated with improved IPV and health outcomes,

although the benefits were not significantly different between screening and usual care. In 15 fair- and good-quality studies which assessed 13 screening instruments, six instruments were found to be highly accurate. In family-planning clinics, four trials reported reduced pregnancy coercion and unsafe relationships, reduced IPV and improved outcomes for pregnant women, and reduced IPV for new mothers. Finally, while some women experienced discomfort, loss of privacy, emotional distress, or concerns regarding further abuse, most women reported only minimal adverse events associated with IPV screening in the health care setting.

"Screening instruments accurately identify women experiencing IPV," the authors write. "Screening women for IPV can provide benefits that vary by population, while potential adverse effects have minimal impact on most women."

More information: Abstract
Full Text

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