

Advocacy intervention does not produce meaningful results in depression among abused Chinese women

August 3 2010

Among Chinese women who are survivors of intimate partner violence, an advocacy intervention that included empowerment sessions and telephone support from social workers did not result in a clinically meaningful improvement in depressive symptoms, according to a study in the August 4 issue of *JAMA*, a theme issue on violence and human rights.

Intimate partner violence (IPV) against [women](#) can have negative mental health consequences for survivors, including depression. Advocacy interventions aim to enhance abused women's self-care by helping them to make sense of the situation, identify potential solutions, and achieve the goals they have set.

Agnes Tiwari, Ph.D., of the University of Hong Kong, China, and colleagues conducted an assessor-blinded randomized [controlled trial](#) of 200 Chinese women 18 years or older with a history of IPV. The trial was conducted from February 2007 to June 2009 in a community center in Hong Kong to determine whether an advocacy intervention would improve the IPV survivors' depressive symptoms.

The intervention consisted of a 30-minute empowerment session delivered by a registered social worker, focusing on enhanced choice making and problem solving combined with safety assessment and planning. It was followed by weekly telephone support from the same

social worker. Women in the control group received the usual community services—including child care, health care and promotion and recreational programs.

Women in both groups reported average rates of [severe depression](#) at baseline, moderate depression at three months, and mild depression at nine months.

"After adjusting the baseline values, the intervention effects on the changes at three and nine months did not significantly differ," the authors report.

Women in both groups reported an initial increase in average rates of partner psychological aggression, and then low rates at the completion of the study.

In the follow-up telephone support calls, the women's expressed needs focused on parenting problems and rarely on problems with their intimate partners.

"In this randomized clinical trial of an advocacy intervention for community-dwelling abused Chinese women, the intervention did not result in a clinically meaningful improvement in [depressive symptoms](#)," the authors conclude.

More information: *JAMA*. 2010;304[5]:536-543.

Provided by JAMA and Archives Journals

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