

# The Medical Minute: Health care plays role in domestic abuse screening

September 29 2010, By Judy J. Walter

---

Domestic violence is a health care problem of epidemic proportions in Pennsylvania and across the country. Nationally, nearly one-third of American women (31 percent) report being physically or sexually abused by a current or former husband or boyfriend at some point in their lives. The rates of abuse among adolescents and within lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities also are staggering.

Thirty percent of Americans say they know a woman who has been physically abused by her husband or boyfriend in the past year. The Pennsylvania Coalition Against [Domestic Violence](#) reports that in Pennsylvania during 2009, 179 deaths were directly attributable to domestic violence. Between July 1, 2009, and June 30, 2010, the Dauphin County Civil Court processed 826 Protection from [Abuse Orders](#), of which 626 temporary orders were granted and 381 final orders granted. The YWCA of Greater Harrisburg, which serves domestic violence victims in Dauphin County, helped more than 2,300 adult victims and 270 children. More than 1,700 crisis hot line calls were handled, and 217 women and 144 children were provided shelter.

These numbers are startling. Just as startling are the wasted opportunities to help victims of domestic violence in the [health care](#) setting. The health effects of domestic violence are staggering. Half of all female victims of intimate violence report an injury of some type, and about 20 percent of them seek medical assistance. In addition to the immediate trauma and injuries caused by abuse, domestic violence contributes to a number of [chronic health problems](#) (such as migraines, ulcers, IBS, back pain,

[pelvic pain](#), STI's and depression) and interferes with the management of other illnesses. But too often the source of these injuries and illnesses go undetected.

Screening for abuse and properly responding to domestic violence is central to an integrated health practice. We recognize that the health setting is often the only place for battered victims to seek help, and if doctors and nurses know how to detect abuse and provide referrals and support, we have the opportunity to help the many hidden victims of domestic violence in our community.

Far too many [victims](#) are facing abuse in Pennsylvania and across the country every day. The good news is that domestic violence is a problem we can solve -- and Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center is screening patients and playing an essential role in that critical effort.

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

Citation: The Medical Minute: Health care plays role in domestic abuse screening (2010, September 29) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2010-09-medical-minute-health-role-domestic.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--