

Study casts light on addressing domestic violence among female US veterans

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A new study, published in Springer's *Journal of Family Violence*, casts light on how health care providers respond to the emotional, sexual and physical violence that female veterans sometimes experience at the hands of their intimate partners. According to the research group, this type of abuse can be common in the lives of women veterans and there is a need to understand how health care providers can best be responsive to this population's health care needs. The research was headed by Dr. Katherine Iverson and colleagues of the National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Boston Healthcare System and Boston University School of Medicine.

The study included in-depth qualitative interviews with 12 primary care providers who treat [female veterans](#) at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitals in the New England region. Because approximately 15 percent of all military service personnel and 10 percent of veterans are women, it is important that the VA is responsive to all of [women veterans' health care](#) needs, including exposure to [intimate partner violence](#) (IPV). The article provides foundational research that can inform policy in terms of implementing procedures and strategies to help practitioners deal with the physical, sexual and psychological harm caused by IPV, and associated health problems, such as posttraumatic stress disorder and depression.

Iverson's findings provide important insights into the experiences and recommendations of primary care providers within the VA system. For instance, participants overwhelmingly supported the need to routinely

screen female patients for experiences of IPV. Many participants believed that direct inquiry is most important because patients are more likely to disclose such experiences in the context of a routine screening program with a trusted health care provider. Participants offered suggestions for educating VA providers, including recommendations for in-person trainings as opposed to online training interventions. The benefits of interdisciplinary coordination of care and referrals, and team-based approaches to detection and intervention were also highlighted.

"Because intimate partner violence is an all-too-common experience for women veterans, it is critical to understand the practices, perspectives and training needs of [health care providers](#) within the VA, so that we can sensitively and effectively provide care for this form of violence in women [veterans](#)' lives," says Iverson, who stressed the need for further research in this field.

More information: Iverson, K. et al (2013) VHA Primary Care Provider's Perspectives on Screening Female Veterans for Intimate Partner Violence: A Preliminary Assessment. *Journal of Family Violence* DOI: [10.1007/s10896-013-9544-7](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-013-9544-7)

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