

Study examines clinical and policy implications of intimate partner violence

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(Boston) —Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a serious public health concern for all, however women who experience IPV are more likely to sustain injury and report adverse health consequences. An expanding body of research suggests that experience of IPV is common in women veterans (WV), particularly those who access Veterans Health Administration (VA) services.

In a review paper currently available online in the *Journal of Women's Health*, Megan R. Gerber, MD, MPH, assistant professor of medicine, Boston University School of Medicine and Medical Director, Women's Health, VA Boston Healthcare System Primary Care Service Line Manager Women's Health, VISN 1 Director Women's Health Fellowship VA BHS, explores clinical and policy implications for the VA.

"With unprecedented numbers of women serving in the military and subsequently becoming veterans, it is critical that clinicians and advocates caring for women Veterans understand the impact of IPV on this population," explains Gerber.

According to Gerber, women veterans have unique risk factors for experiencing IPV including high rates of pre-military trauma as well as military sexual trauma and PTSD. "Correlates of IPV, traumatic brain injury and homelessness, are common among this group. While research on women veterans' [health](#) and IPV is emergent, evidence suggests that IPV results in multiple health sequelae and increased healthcare utilization," she said.

A number of targeted interventions and treatments are available for women veterans who experience IPV, including evidence-based [mental health services](#). Gerber believes the VA is well positioned to implement screening programs for WV to facilitate referral to needed services and treatments available both within and outside its facilities. "As the population of [women veterans](#) expands, future research will be needed to determine best practices; many avenues of inquiry exist. Women veterans are strong and resilient. It is crucial that those who work with them recognize evidence of IPV and refer to needed services and evidence based-treatment to enable strength-based recovery," she added.

Provided by Boston University Medical Center

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