

Online support for domestic violence to be trialled

April 29 2014, by Anne Rahilly



(Medical Xpress)—Improving rates of poor disclosure by victims of domestic violence is the focus of a new online web based project led by the University of Melbourne.

I-DECIDE is being developed by Professor Kelsey Hegarty from the Department of General Practice at the University of Melbourne from intervention work with General Practitioners in Australia and based on a US pilot of a safety decision aid.

The innovative online project offers users security through self-directed survey questions. It provides a safe, private, secure forum for women to assess their relationship, weigh up their priorities, and plan for a safer future for themselves and their children.

"In light of the recent Victorian deaths in the context of [family violence](#), innovative solutions including the use of technology are needed to promote safety of women and children." Professor Hegarty said.

Professor Hegarty has previously led the largest [domestic violence](#) screening and counselling intervention trial in general practice in the world. The study, published in *The Lancet* last year, found that trained family doctors enquired more about the safety of the women and their children and that depression outcomes were better for women invited to attend the general practitioner counselling.

Professor Hegarty found that there is poor disclosure to GPs by [abused women](#) and women's preferences have led to the development of this non face-to-face method of responding to women who are afraid of their partners.

"This is a highly innovative project, which will significantly advance the knowledge base in two areas: first, improving resources for women experiencing family violence; and secondly, in the field of delivering social interventions via the web," she said.

"Our work will be of immediate benefit to Australian women and will also generate new knowledge," Professor Hegarty said.

"Abused women's decisions for their families and themselves are not straightforward and may change over time. The safety process takes time, resources, and involves women's consideration of complex individual and community factors."

"Our challenge is to help [women](#) become more aware of abuse within their relationships, gain the self-confidence necessary to take action, and develop a personalised [safety](#) plan that recognises and considers priorities during critical decision making." she said.

Provided by University of Melbourne

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