

World health systems need to be better in preventing violence against women

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Image from The Lancet series on Violence against women and girls.

New research shows how important global health systems are in responding to and preventing violence against women.

Responses to violence against [women](#) should be integrated into the medical, nursing and public health sectors according to new global research involving the University of Melbourne.

Professor Kelsey Hegarty from the Department of General Practice said [violence against women](#) is a public health problem worldwide, with

forms of abuse including intimate physical, sexual and emotional partner violence, [female genital mutilation](#), and [sexual assault](#).

"Violence against women needs to have a higher priority in [health policies](#), budgets and the training of health professionals," she said.

Professor Hegarty is second author of a paper in The *Lancet* series on 'Violence against women and girls'. The paper includes a [health systems](#) model and five case studies that provide evidence for clinical intervention, practical lessons from experiences in various countries, and key recommendations to tackle the global crisis.

Recommendations include providing a safe environment for disclosure of abuse, initial and ongoing supportive responses, working with advocacy services, and clinical care for women who have experienced sexual assault.

Professor Hegarty said that today being UN International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, or White Ribbon Day, was an opportunity for a global call to action.

"There is a global consensus that health care professionals need to know how to identify patients experiencing violence and also be able to provide supportive care and referral to services."

"More than just a supportive role, the health system can also help empower and assist women to enhance their own and their children's safety to improve their lives and future."

The *Lancet* series on 'Violence against women and girls' was launched on Friday, November 21 at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine in London.

More information: *Lancet* series on 'Violence against women and girls': www.thelancet.com/series/violence-against-women-and-girls

Provided by University of Melbourne

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