

# Physicians not prepared for male patients who perpetrate intimate partner violence

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Family medicine physicians feel underprepared to serve patients whom they know are perpetrators of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), particularly if they also provide care to the victim.

These findings appear in the *Journal of American Board of Family Medicine*.

IPV is a serious, preventable [public health](#) problem that affects millions of Americans. The term "intimate partner violence" describes physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse. It can occur among heterosexual or same-sex couples and does not require sexual intimacy.

Researchers from Boston University Schools of Medicine (BUSM) and Public Health (BUSPH) and Boston Medical Center (BMC) conducted a qualitative study, which involved interviewing [primary care physicians](#) (from the department of family medicine) who reported experiences with male patients known to have perpetrated IPV.

The majority of the physicians in the study reported learning that their [male patients](#) were perpetrating [intimate partner violence](#) (IPV) because the female victim, who was also their patient, disclosed the abuse, although a number of physicians reported that men disclose their own abusive behavior in order to get help. These physicians described feeling unprepared to intervene when male perpetrators of IPV requested help in addressing their abusive behavior.

"Our findings that physicians lack training to intervene with perpetrators of IPV is consistent with recent research that has shown that only 23 percent of family medicine residency training programs include any training at all regarding how to respond to IPV perpetrators," explained corresponding author Brian Penti, MD, assistant professor of family medicine at BUSM and a [family medicine](#) physician at BMC.

According to Penti despite the prevalence of IPV and its impact on victims and their children, the healthcare system has largely avoided addressing the men who perpetrate IPV even though these men often access the healthcare system. "Further research is needed to better identify perpetrators of IPV and to develop effective interventions that can be provided in the [primary care](#) setting, and to assist these men with getting the help they need to stop their abusive behaviors," he added.

Provided by Boston University Medical Center

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