

## Features

# Physicians join fight against wife abuse

By LISA BOONSTOPPEL-POT  
The Herald

In order to help physicians become more knowledgeable about what they call the frequent, severe and chronic problem of wife abuse, the Ontario Medical Association has developed a booklet providing guidelines on assessing and treating victims of wife abuse.

Dr. Joan Bain, chairperson of the Wife Assault Committee, says the OMA has been working since 1984 to increase physicians' awareness and understanding of wife abuse as a health issue. "On average, a woman suffers 35 episodes of assault before approaching the police."

Dr. Debbie Zeni, President of the Georgetown Medical Association says "any document given to physicians on wife abuse that heightens their awareness of the problems improves things for the people abused."

"Physicians generally don't have a problem dealing with wife abuse," she said, "but sometimes while they are treating patients, (for bruises, cuts or worse), they may not be thinking of it and may not recognize it right away."

But she says physicians are generally aware of the problems facing women in regards to abuse. Area physicians meet weekly to listen to talks and learn about abuse she said.

The wife abuse booklet says that conservative estimates suggest one in 10 Canadian women living with a man suffers physical abuse in their relationship. It also says one-third of battered women either watched their mothers being battered or were abused as children and one out of two men who beat their wives were abused as children or witnessed domestic violence.

The pamphlet says physicians have a major role to play in identifying cases, understanding the problem; and being supportive and assisting community agencies in the prevention of domestic violence.

Dr. Zeni agrees with this. "Physicians can play a role in enabling and encouraging women to remove themselves from abusive situations. They can help women find alternatives rather than return to that situation."

The booklet helps to answer some common questions people who haven't experienced abuse ask. Questions concerning what are the characteristics of violent families and why women stay. The pamphlet reveals that women often feel guilty and somehow responsible for the violence while the male batterers often appear to be competent and successful to outsiders but within the family they try to exert excessive control over their partners and are frequently jealous of

any outside contacts with friends of family.

As to why women stay in abusive situations, the booklet suggests that women feel a great need to hold their family together at any cost and that between the violent episodes, the batterers are often caring, loving husbands and fathers.

As well, the women may be economically dependant on the batterer and existent social assistance and subsidized housing programs often cannot counter this dependence. Furthermore, the women may fear retaliation from their husband if they leave.

The booklet goes on to outline approaches to treatment of the male batterer and his family and concludes with numerous clinical scenarios that will assist the physician in approaching both the victim and batterers.



about four to one, Wilson found. About 24 men are killed by their wives in Canada each year, and in most of those cases, women are defending themselves against assault. Many of the men who are killed have, at one time or another, accused their wives of infidelity.

As Gartner sees it: "We may be giving women a choice: either kill or be killed."  
(Canadian Science News)

# Women facing greatest risk from their intimate partners

By SALLY JOHNSTON

Present studies indicate that more Canadian women are dying at the hands of their male lovers than official figures show and that battered women face the greatest risk of violence and murder when they try to leave abusive partners.

Although official Statistics Canada data indicate that an average of 75 women are killed each year by their husbands, the true picture is far worse, according to research by Dr. Rosemary Gartner, professor of law and sociology at the University of Toronto.

She says StatCan's figures only include those women killed by intimate partners to whom they are legally married, but "the figures are probably 20 to 30 per cent higher if you include women who are killed by their lovers, boyfriends and ex-spouses."

Gartner studied murder files from Toronto police between 1921 and 1988 and found that 261 women were killed by their intimate partners - about half of all women killed in the city during those years.

"For women, it seems the greatest risk they face is from intimate partners," she says.

Nor does the situation show any signs of improving, despite increased public awareness of violence against women and several measures to help abused women, Gartner suggests.

Since the mid-1990s many steps have been taken to stem violent crimes against women; for example, police nationwide have been instructed to lay charges where evidence of assault exists, even when the victim does not want charges laid.

Canada's network of shelters has grown to 300 and more than 100 counselling programs exist for men who abuse women.

However, this is not enough, says Gartner. While these measures encourage women to leave abusive partners, they don't provide them increased protection against violence and may even put them at greater risk.

In fact, she says that abused women face the greatest risk at the point of separation from their partners.

"The scary thing is that women may seek ways out of an abusive relationship, but that doesn't necessarily protect them. Shelters are only a short-term solution," she says.

"There are many, many cases of women being tracked down for months, even years, by angry and jealous ex-partners. These women need more pro-active police protection. The men should be arrested and locked up. It may seem oppressive but we have to help these women."

Gartner's findings are supported by those of another homicide researcher, Dr. Margo Wilson, a psychologist at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.

The common thread in spousal murders is male sexual jealousy, Wilson said in a lecture at the university. Usually the woman is killed shortly after leaving the man she lives with. In men's accounts of why they killed the women, most say it was because the woman was fooling around and they couldn't stand that.

In most cases, a large component of violent sexual jealousy is

extreme possessiveness - a 'proprietary' view of the woman as something belonging to the man, Gartner adds.

Relationships between young women and middle-aged men, so-called May-December romances, are statistically most likely to end in murder of the woman, says Wilson. She is not sure why, and intends to research the area further.

She hypothesizes that in such relationships - with a 10-year or larger age gap between the partners - the older partner feels insecure because they feel themselves less attractive. In addition, the younger partner may have a wider range of interests, activities and friends that the older partner finds threatening, she guesses.

She warns women against men who show signs of sexual jealousy. Though young women may find it flattering, sexual proprietariness is the one theme that permeates the literature on spousal homicide and on wife beating, she points out.

Women killed by men outnumber men killed by women by

# Rape Crisis Centre approves self-defence course

By LISA BOONSTOPPEL-POT  
The Herald

Giving women choices and alternatives to being victim's of sexual and violent assault is what the Halton Rape Crisis Centre and Wen-Do Women's Self Defence Corporation are trying to do by offering a self defence course for women.

As part of their mandate, the Halton Rape Crisis Centre provides these opportunities for women. They, along with the Wen-Do Corporation and Maple Grove United Church in Milton (where the course is taught), provide the program which is design-

ed for women to learn easy-to-use and easy-to-remember methods of protecting themselves in a wide range of situations.

Susanne Reimer, from the Crisis Centre, said more and more women are wanting to take self-defence courses. This is the third time this particular course has been offered to Halton women since September, 1990. Once 20 women sign up for the course it is held at the church.

Ms. Reimer said the number of calls the Crisis Centre receives has doubled since 1989 when they received 360 calls.

"The bulk of the calls are from

women who knew their attacker which really belies the myth of a stranger lurking around to attack," she said.

One of the great things about the Wen-Do course is that it gives women a chance to "share the experiences of being a woman," said Ms. Reimer who herself has taken the course.

Information sheets from the Wen-Do corporation say response from participants in the program indicate the discussions about wife assault, sexual harassment and sexual assault are the most important part of the course and help women realize that the at-

tack was not their fault.

Besides the discussions, Wen-Do offers techniques designed for smaller, non-violent women to defend themselves against larger, stronger, and violent attackers.

In the basic 12-to-14 hour course, women learn releases from chokes and holds, how to make a fist, how to kick effectively and the location of vulnerable targets on an attacker. As well, effective defences against more threatening attacks such as those with weapons and more than one attacker are covered.

A Wen-Do spokesperson said the techniques have been taught to girls as young as 12 and to women over the age of 80. It has been taught in Toronto since 1972.

The fee for the course is \$45 per

person. For more information on the course or information about the Crisis Centre and what it offers, call the Halton Rape Crisis Centre at 847-1588.

**FLYERS**  
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The fee for the course is \$45 per

**A&P**

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