

## INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

### Description

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a serious, preventable public health problem that affects millions of Americans. This preferred term, IPV, describes physical, sexual or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse. This type of violence occurs among heterosexual or same-sex couples and does not require sexual intimacy.<sup>1</sup> Seen across all cultures and populations, IPV may include physical or sexual violence, neglect, emotional or psychological abuse, financial abuse or any threat of these.<sup>1,2</sup> Apart from death and injury, IPV is associated with an elevated risk for a wide range of adverse health outcomes. Some of the most serious consequences of IPV are substance and alcohol abuse, depression, suicide, chronic mental and physical conditions and miscarriage.<sup>2</sup> Patients experiencing IPV do not always report abuse, but they are often treated in emergency departments where emergency and forensic nurses can initially assess and provide assistance to them. Identification of patients experiencing IPV is the first step toward effective advocacy.<sup>3</sup>

### ENA/IAFN Position

The Emergency Nurses Association and the International Association of Forensic Nurses jointly endorse the following statements:

1. Nurses routinely screen patients for IPV.
2. Nurses consider safety, confidentiality, privacy and compassion when caring for patients experiencing IPV.<sup>3,4</sup>
3. Nurses use resources, such as sexual assault nurse examiners (SANE), forensic nurse examiners (FNE), and other specialized care providers, to assist in the identification and care of patients experiencing IPV.<sup>5,6</sup>
4. Nurses report IPV according to their jurisdictional laws and institutional policies.<sup>7</sup>
5. Nurses collaborate with other professionals and/or disciplines to develop and implement strategies, protocols and education for improved identification, reporting, protection and primary prevention when caring for all individuals at risk for IPV, maltreatment and neglect.
6. Nurses use evidence-based tools and educational resources to facilitate and authenticate the approach to care for the IPV patient.

### Background

Research has significantly improved our understanding of the physiological responses associated with IPV. Given the high prevalence of IPV and the underlying adverse health outcomes and

costs of IPV, it is critical to address this public health problem. Routine screening for intimate partner violence is the solution suggested by the United States Preventative Services Task Force (USPSTF).<sup>8</sup> Women of childbearing age are the target population, and USPSTF further goes on to say that women found to be at-risk require referral to intervention services.

IPV prevention and intervention can substantially decrease the public health burden of IPV and improve the health and well-being of patients in the health care system.<sup>2</sup> According to one study's recommendation, there is an urgent need to integrate information on IPV into nursing care curricula to foster understanding of its pervasiveness and far-reaching implications for patient health.<sup>2</sup> Increasing awareness assists emergency and forensic nurses to become more knowledgeable of IPV and committed to assimilating the skills of identification, assessment, intervention, prevention, documentation and reporting into nursing practice.

## References

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