Childhood Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence

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Objectives

1) Discuss the definition and prevalence of intimate partner violence
2) Discuss the effects of witnessing violence on children
3) Understand how to assess for intimate partner violence in the clinic setting
4) Determine how to proceed if a family is suffering from IPV
Intimate Partner Violence

CDC definition
Pattern of coercive behaviors that may include battering and injury, psychological abuse, sexual assault, progressive social isolation, deprivation, and intimidation.

Can also include financial or immigration abuse
Power and Control Wheel

COERCION AND THREATS
EMOTIONAL ABUSE
PHYSICAL ABUSE
SEXUAL ABUSE
POWER AND CONTROL
INTIMIDATION
ECONOMIC ABUSE
ISOLATION

Taken from the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence
Intimate Partner Violence: Statistics

A medical and public health epidemic affecting nearly **1 out of 3 women** worldwide (according to the World Health Organization’s multi-country study)
In the United States

- ¼ women victims of severe physical abuse
- 1/7 men victims of severe physical abuse
- 1/5 female high school students report being physically or sexually abused by a dating partner.
- 1/3 adolescent girls is a victim of physical, emotional, or verbal abuse from a dating partner
Domestic Violence and Pregnancy

- Up to 1 in 12 pregnant women are abused
- Pregnant women experiencing abuse 40-60% more likely to experience health problems
- Children born to abused mothers: 17% more likely to be underweight, 30% more likely to require NICU care
- Homicide is the second leading cause of traumatic death for pregnant and recently pregnant women in the US
Children Witnessing Violence at Home: Statistics

10 million children in the US witness domestic violence (another study states 15.5 million with 7.5 million witnessing severe violence)

One large-scale study showed that 25.3% of children surveyed had witnessed violence in their homes, schools, and communities in the past year. No gender differences.
Witnessing violence

- Seeing violent acts
- Hearing about violence acts
- Seeing injuries
- Having to move to shelters or witnessing police intervention
Co-occurrence of Child Abuse and Domestic Violence

- Literature shows that there is co-occurrence between child abuse and domestic violence
- Osofsky (1999): children exposed to domestic violence are 15 times more likely to be physically abused and neglected
- Kellog & Menard (2003): 77% of sexual abuse offenders also perpetrator of inter-parental abuse
Childhood Exposure to Domestic Violence: A cycle

- Intergenerational violence

- 3.8 times more likely to become perpetrators or victims of IPV in the future (2)

- More likely to have abusive dating partnerships as teens (Levendosky 2002; Wekerle & Wolfe 1999)
Childhood Exposure to Violence: Mental Health

- Internalizing: Anxiety, depression, withdrawal, somatic complaints
- Externalizing: attention problems, aggressive behavior, rule-breaking actions

One meta-analysis showed that preschool children who witness interparental violence are at similar risk for internalizing problems as children who are direct victims of abuse.
Childhood Exposure to Violence: Mental Health

- Post-traumatic stress disorder

Childhood Exposure to Violence: Physical Health

- Graham-Bermann & Seng (2005): 160 preschool children. 4 times more likely to have asthma, allergy, GI problems

- Blair-Merritt et al (2008): 209 families, 62 affected by IPV. Mothers affected by IPV significantly less likely to report a regular site for well-child care or primary pediatric provider. Less likely to have a medical home.
Childhood Exposure to Violence: Physical Health


- Martin (2002): Extreme fear that children feel by witnessing violence can be associated with headaches, stomachaches, insomnia, nightmares, sleepwalking, enuresis.
Childhood Exposure to Violence: Developmental Delay

- Gilbert et al. (2013): 16,595 participants younger than 72 months. Failure along 1 developmental milestone out of four domains and within the domains of language, social, and motor.
Childhood Exposure to Violence: Adulthood

- Adverse Childhood Experiences study

- Another study (3023 subjects) - associated with mental health conditions such as depression, alcohol dependence, family stressors, suicide attempts (Roustit).
Childhood Exposure to Violence: Cultural Factors

- Several added challenges to immigrant women

- Intergenerational violence (in-law abuse) -> more research needed
Therefore...

It is clear that witnessing violence at home has detrimental physical, mental, psychological, and developmental affects on children and adolescents.
Screening for IPV in pediatric populations

- Universal screening: a controversial topic
- Self-administered versus verbally administered
- Broad screening question: *How are things at home? How are things with your partner? Do you feel safe at home?*
- Physical abuse screening question: *Has your partner ever kicked, hit, slapped, or otherwise physically hurt you?*
- Several validated screening tools exist-WAST, ISA
If IPV is present at Home

- Important to assess safety:
  - Do you feel safe at home?
  - Where is your partner now?
- Should create a safety plan with the family
  - Collecting a variety of items in preparation of leaving: money, passport, car keys, birth certificates, clothes, medications
  - Asking a trusted neighbor
  - Have a code with family and friends that communicates that intimate partner violence is occurring
  - Remove and disarm weapons
Safety Plan Templates


Resources for Families

- Resources for families: http://nctsn.org/content/resources

- Can refer to local resources including:
  - Maitri
  - Next Door Solutions
  - YWCA Silicon Valley
  - Between Friends
  - National DV Hotline
  - Family Advocacy Program
Laws in California

- One of the only states where health care providers are mandatory reporters of physical IPV
- One of 22 states where the abuser faces child maltreatment charges if a child witnesses abuse
- HOWEVER: concern that is the survivor of abuse who suffers because of these laws
References

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