Abuse in Pregnancy

Jo-Anne Robertson
Best Start Resource Centre

Before we start...
Abuse in Pregnancy: Information and Strategies for Prenatal Education

Definition

• Pattern of abuse experienced by women by her current or former intimate partner (including dating partners). It is an expression of power, control and domination through a range of ongoing an escalating behaviours.

(SOGC, 2005)
Types of Abuse

- Physical
- Psychological/Emotional
- Verbal
- Sexual
- Spiritual
- Financial
- Digital

PHAC, 2014; National Domestic Violence Hotline, 2013

Why is Abuse Against Women a Concern for Prenatal Education?
Prevalence Rates

- 6-8% of pregnant women in Canada
- 30.2% of women who reported physical or sexual abuse in Ontario said the abuse occurred during a pregnancy

(SOGC, 2005; PHAC, 2009)

Impact of Abuse
Impact of Abuse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Fetus</th>
<th>Infants/Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical injuries</td>
<td>Premature rupture of the membranes</td>
<td>Higher rates of abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal bleeding</td>
<td>Rupture of the placenta</td>
<td>Physical injury</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unwanted pregnancy</td>
<td>Fetal hemorrhage</td>
<td>Disorders of attachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased self-esteem</td>
<td>Miscarriage</td>
<td>Reduced self-regulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>Possible changes in brain architecture (toxic stress)</td>
<td>Mood and anxiety disorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td></td>
<td>School-related problems</td>
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<tr>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td></td>
<td>Substance use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep and eating disorders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance use</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Death</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


What Can Prenatal Educators Do?

- Provide information
- Discuss
- Screen
- Support
- Refer
Information

• Wallet cards
• Pamphlets
• Posters

Discussions about Abuse

• With pregnant women only; not with partners present
Screening

- When women are alone
  (Ontario Woman Abuse Screening Project, 2000)

Before Screening

- Explain duty to report
- Give rationale
- Ask permission
Duty to Report

Before Screening

• Explain duty to report
• Give rationale
• Ask permission
Your own practice

• Do you discuss abuse with women in your prenatal education practice?
• If you ask about abuse, what do you say? What words do you use?
• Do you use a violence/abuse screening tool? If so, which one(s)?

Screening

1. Within the past year, or since you have become pregnant, have you ever been hit, slapped, kicked or otherwise physically hurt by someone?
2. Are you in a relationship with a person who threatens or physically hurts you?
3. Has anyone forced you to have sexual activities that made you uncomfortable?

Antenatal Psychological Health Assessment
Support

• If disclosure, help with safety planning

www.sheltersafe.ca

Leaving the Relationship
Support

REFERRALS

Documentation

- RNAO Woman Abuse Best Practice Guideline (2005, 2012 supplement)
Abuse in Pregnancy: Information and Strategies for the Prenatal Education

www.beststart.org

Questions?
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### Johnson’s Types of Intimate Partner Violence (2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of IPV</th>
<th>Client</th>
<th>Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intimate Terrorism</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent Resistance</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational Couple Violence</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Johnson, 2008; Kelly & Johnson, 2008