

Effects of violence on women's health and nursing approaches

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Violence against women known as a kind of human rights violation in the whole world refers to any kind of behavior which arises from social gender inequality, threatens women's physical health, causes long-term risks on their health, leads to compulsion and pressure in their social or private lives, and obstructs arbitrarily their freedom (1,2).

Violence, which is increasingly common in the world, is a social problem. The statistics on violence against women in France showed that 95% of the people who were subjected to violence were female and 55% of them were subjected to spouse violence. In the WHO violence and health report (2002), the rate of physical violence exposure in women ranged between 10-69% for the whole world, while this rate ranged between 25% -30% in Turkey (3). A research of violence against women in Turkey found the rate of physical violence exposure in women as 39% (4,5).

The report published by the WHO in 2013 indicates that 35% of women worldwide are exposed to either physical and/or sexual violence of intimate partner violence (spouse or cohabitant) or sexual violence of non-partner. However, some country surveys show that 70% of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from their partners throughout their lifetime. 38% of femicide in the world are committed by male spouses or cohabitants (6).

Women are victims of violence in every period of their lives. Since violence can occur in physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, and economic forms; it can cause different health problems. These include:

- Physical injuries (wound, bruise, fractures and so on),
- Psychological problems (depression, lack of self-confidence, feeling of guilty-embarrassment, rape trauma syndrome, and post-traumatic stress disorder)
- Reproductive health problems (unintended pregnancies and abortions, premature births, sexually transmitted diseases (HIV, Hepatitis), inability to access reproductive health services, maternal-infant mortality, and sexual dysfunctions)
- Negative health behaviors (substance use, excessive eating)
- Mortality and morbidity (7-11)

The medical staff, who encounter violence victimized women at first, have significant roles in documenting violence, reporting it to legal authorities, and also treating and caring of the victims. Nurses can be effective in reducing the consequences of violence, by performing effectively their roles in identifying domestic violence against women, supporting high-risk groups, and caring of the violence victims, and thus can fulfill their primary protection responsibility in preventing violence against women (12). Forensic nursing, which is still not adopted in Turkey is the application of forensic science to scientific research and trauma treatment by combining it with bio-psycho-social education of nurses, and/or to judicial events in death of perpetrators and victims of violence, criminal activities, and traumatic accidents. Therefore, it is necessary that courses, conferences and trainings, which are important in the development of an appropriate approach and

forensic nursing model, should be carried out by persons who are trained in this field (13).

In addition, nurses may contribute in the recovery process of violence victimized women by trying to strengthen them thorough monitoring, informing and rehabilitative services during and after the process. Since the violence concerns not only women but also their relatives, this care service should cover the relatives as well. It is important to monitor risky individuals or families in the health care process that targets holistic approach. However, studies report that nurses are inadequate in this regard (14,15). The priority on this subject is to increase their knowledge and skills in the identification of violence.

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Sahin

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