Creating safe hospitals for women experiencing violence
6th Biennial National Conference on Health and Domestic Violence
San Francisco March 2012
Presenter: Helena Maher
Authors: Helena Maher & Elizabeth McLindon
The Royal Women’s Hospital, Victoria, Australia

Overview of this presentation
1. The Royal Women’s Hospital’s whole-of-hospital response to violence against women (VAW).
2. Common challenges experienced by metropolitan hospitals in Victoria building capacity to recognise and respond to VAW.
3. Reflections on necessary components for building capacity in hospitals.

About the Women’s
- Australia’s largest specialist women’s hospital;
- 2,300 staff, 28,000 inpatient services, 150,000 outpatient episodes of care and 6,500 babies;
- A diverse community; from 175 countries, 60 languages, 40 faiths;
- Four service streams: maternity, neonatal services, gynaecology inc cancers, women’s health;
- Social model of health includes commitment to gender equity, innovation and advocacy.
Context in Victoria

- 2001 research found 27% pregnant women at the Women’s experiencing violence in current relationship;
- 2004 Burden of Disease study found intimate partner violence was major cause of preventable death and disease in women aged 15 to 44;
- State and federal VAW plans have focused on integrating and improving community, police and justice responses.

Women’s VAW Strategy

- Women’s approach unique amongst hospitals;
- Multiple interventions for a comprehensive, whole-of-hospital approach;
- Primary Prevention – Sexual Assault Prevention Program in Secondary Schools;
- Early Interventions – Clinical Practice Guideline and training for staff in principles of violence sensitive practice;
- Recovery and response services – CASA House and Women’s Social Support Service.

Community Education Program
Early Results at the Women’s

- Increased support for women;
- Evidence-based clinical practice guideline for inquiry, management and referral;
- Improved skills and confidence in trained staff;
- Award winning violence prevention program in 31 schools around Australia, recognised as leading practice;
- Piloting a co-located family violence legal clinic.
Building Capacity in the Sector

- 2010 workshop with government and hospitals to discuss the need for consistent, evidence-based approach in hospitals;
- Working group building capacity in five metropolitan hospitals, chaired by the Women’s;
- Social work led, identifying training needs, reviewing policies and procedures, arrangements with community services to provide family violence clinics.

Challenges in Victoria

- No policy mandate from government
- Questions about the evidence supporting a role for hospitals;
- Concerns about implications for demand management;
- Limited resources for service development and training;
- Challenges of engage health professionals when competency not part of registration requirements.

Necessary Components

- Evidence local to funding system, workforce and organisation of health care;
- Champions and leadership in clinical and executive areas;
- Resources to develop workforce expertise beyond risk assessment;
- Social model of health in clinical practice, service development and strategy;
- Feminist understanding of violence against women.
Reasons for Optimism

1. Social work departments building capacity for hospital-wide responses;


3. Learning from the US and international models.

Conclusion

In summary:
• Research shows that violence is a women’s health issue;
• Model for whole of hospital strategy;
• Significant challenges for hospitals to build capacity;
• Components for advancing health care in hospitals for women experiencing violence.

References

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• VicHealth 2009 Respectful Relationships Education Violence Prevention and Respectful Relationships Education in Victorian Secondary Schools Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Melbourne
• Council of Australian Governments 2010 National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra
• Victorian Government 2012 Action Plan Consultation Framework - Addressing Violence against Women and their Children Department of Human Services, Melbourne
Contact us

CPG:
http://www.thewomens.org.au/ViolenceAgain
stWomenManagementandReferralOptions

Email:
Elizabeth.McLindon@thewomens.org.au
Helena.Maher@thewomens.org.au

Tel: 61 (3) 8345 2027
Web: www.thewomens.org.au