



Adult Survivors of Child Abuse

RACGP Women & Violence Project

The abuse may involve

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect
- Ritual abuse

Incidence of Abuse

- **20% of women in a community survey reported sexual abuse before the age of 16 years (Flemming)**
- **39% of women sitting in GPs waiting rooms reported sexual abuse before 16 (Mazza)**
- **More at risk of suffering domestic violence than women who were not abused**
- **Males are also abused as children though less frequently than females. This can involve all types of abuse**

Consequences of Abuse

- Abuse is associated with : depression, anxiety, other psychological disorders, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual dysfunction, functional gastro-intestinal disorders, headaches, chronic pain and multiple somatic symptoms. Sexual abuse is linked with chronic pelvic pain in females.

Role of the GP

- Awareness of this as an underlying contributing factor in presentation
- Willingness to **HELP**
 - **H**ear what is being said
 - Assess self **E**steem
 - Assess **L**ife situation
 - **P**raise for courage and reassure him they are not blame for the abu

Role of the GP 2

- Understand that abuse has a varying effect on patients depending on who perpetrated the abuse and what happened.
- Work with her or him to understand how it is affecting their life and to explore options that may be helpful.

Develop a network for referral

- Psychiatrist/Psychologist/Couns
- Sexual assault service
- Telephone services, eg Lifeline, Rape Crisis
- Specialised services, eg Dymn House
- Self help groups, eg ASCA

Conclusions

- **General Practitioners** have a pivotal role in delivering high quality and patient centred health care.
- Women have a complexity of health needs related to their role in society and their multiple functions.
- Men may find it difficult to discuss abuse or acknowledge its relationship to their health issues.