

Preventing domestic violence death – is intimate partner sexual assault a risk factor?

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Homicide prevention as our goal

- Intimate partner homicide is a tragic loss of life
- Devastating to those left behind
- Too frequent – 80 homicides + 10 offender suicides in 2007/8
- Prevention relies on:
 - understanding risk
 - understanding men's behaviours and motivations

Intimate partner sexual violence as a risk factor for homicide

Recognised as a risk factor for IP homicide but -

- under-reported by women, denied by abusive men and avoided by workers

Presentation aims:

- consider IPSV in the context of homicide
- consider how to better respond to this risk factor

Possible domestic violence deaths

(Schafran 2010)

- abuser may kill the (ex)partner and/or their children
- abuser may kill third parties
- abuser may kill others and then themselves
- victims may kill themselves
- victim may kill the abuser

Evidence linking IPSV and homicide

- **Bennice et al 2003** -
- **McFarlane & Malecha 2005** -
- **Campbell et al. 2007** – 10 yr review of intimate partner homicide
- **Dobash et al. 2007** – comparative study of DV murderers and DV abusers
- **Adams 2007** – study of homicide offenders and victims of attempted murder and life threatening injury
- **Block 2009** – comparative study of lethal and non-lethal domestic violence cases

IPSV as an exertion of power and a means of control

- Arousal by violent sex
- Exploiting women when vulnerable
- Demanding sex after violence
- IPSV continuing or commencing following separation

- Men's sense of entitlement and rights
- Objectification of women
- Anger about separation and feelings of abandonment

Why is this a problem?

- Women don't disclose
- Men obfuscate
- Workers don't ask

Other difficulties – may be no obvious injury, less likely to be witnesses, few convictions for sexual assault generally

What can we do better?

- Recognise the seriousness of IPSV as a risk factor for lethality
- Identify victims – screening (requires training, supervision and referral)
- Perpetrator programs to routinely address sexual violence
- Prosecutors to assess risk, craft appropriate orders, sanctions and sentences
- Probation and parole
- Judges to deny access to children