

## MEDICAL CARE IN THE EMERGENCY SERVICE FOR WOMEN VICTIM OF VIOLENCE

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**Abstract:** Violence against women is a public health issue and must be addressed in an interdisciplinary way. Medical care in the emergency service can be one of the first gateways to care for women who are victims of violence. However, the lack of preparation of health professionals can hamper care and even reinforce the cycle of violence. The general objective of this work is to analyze the importance of medical care in the emergency service in the context of women victims of violence, addressing the main guidelines and challenges faced by health professionals in this scenario, identifying the importance of medical care in the emergency service in these cases. This is a narrative literature review, carried out based on scientific articles indexed in the Scielo, PubMed and Lilacs databases. Articles published in Portuguese, English and Spanish were selected, with the descriptors “medical care”, “emergency service” and “violence against women”. Studies indicate that many health professionals are still not prepared to deal with violence against women, presenting difficulties in diagnosis, notification and appropriate referral. Furthermore, stigma and lack of sensitivity regarding the issue can reinforce the cycle of violence. However, good practices were also identified, such as the training of health professionals, the creation of care protocols and coordination with other care network services, and adequate care for their recovery. It was concluded that medical care in the emergency service can be an opportunity to care for women who are victims of violence, but it is necessary to guarantee the training of health professionals and coordination with other care network services.

**Keywords:** Public health. Medical care. Recovery.

## INTRODUCTION

Violence directed at women constitutes a serious public health and social problem, transcending geographic, cultural and socioeconomic barriers. Around the globe, numerous women find themselves involved in situations of violence covering the physical, sexual, psychological and patrimonial spheres, often culminating in seriously damaging physical and emotional consequences.

Thus, in this alarming scenario, the role of medical care in emergency services acquires unique relevance in the identification, reception and treatment of victimized women, contributing to their physical and emotional rehabilitation, in addition to being decisive in preventing future episodes.

That said, this article has the general objective of analyzing the importance of medical care in the emergency service in the context of women victims of violence, addressing the main guidelines and challenges faced by health professionals in this scenario. To this end, the specific objectives of this research consist of: (I) presenting the main manifestations of domestic violence against women; (II) investigate the barriers that women face when seeking help or medical care after being victims of gender-based violence; and, finally, (II) point out the importance of medical care in the emergency service in these cases.

Regarding methodological procedures, this work is the result of a bibliographical research of an eminently qualitative nature, a narrative literature review, carried out based on scientific articles indexed in the Scielo, PubMed and Lilacs databases. Articles published in Portuguese, English and Spanish were selected as they seek to investigate the relevance of effective medical care in the care of women victims of domestic violence. In relation to its objectives, this research is considered descriptive and regarding the

technical procedure, this research used a bibliographic review, based on studies by different authors who contributed with their knowledge on the topic.

## DEVELOPMENT

Domestic violence against women is a sad reality that persists in many parts of the world, transcends cultures and borders, and represents a serious violation of human rights. This form of abuse can manifest itself in several ways, causing profound physical, psychological and emotional damage to victims (MARQUES, 2023).

Physical violence is one of the most visible and shocking manifestations. It involves direct aggression, such as punches, kicks and strangulations, which result in obvious physical injuries. In extreme cases, it can even lead to the death of the victim. Physical scars often tell only part of the story, as emotional and psychological violence can be equally devastating. Humiliation, threats, excessive control and social isolation are forms of abuse that erode women's self-esteem and mental health (CALLOU; DE CASTRO MAGALHÃES; ALBUQUERQUE, 2021).

Sexual violence is another dark side of this problem, involving coercion or sexual forcing without the woman's consent. Rape and sexual abuse are serious examples, leaving lasting emotional scars. Furthermore, economic violence traps victims in a cycle of dependence, preventing them from accessing financial resources and opportunities for an independent life (CALLOU; DE CASTRO MAGALHÃES; ALBUQUERQUE, 2021).

Yet, with the advent of technology, digital violence has also become a growing concern. Sending threatening messages online and unauthorized sharing of intimate images are control tactics that have a profound impact on women's lives. Furthermore, institutional violence often makes it difficult

for victims to seek help and justice. Gender discrimination and the lack of support from institutions such as the police and the justice system can perpetuate impunity for attackers (FERNANDES, 2022).

All of these forms of violence are rooted in gender inequality and the mistaken perception that women are inferior to men. To effectively combat domestic violence against women, it is essential that policies and laws are implemented that hold perpetrators accountable and protect victims. Furthermore, it is essential to promote public awareness about this problem and provide adequate support to women who face situations of violence (MARQUES, 2023).

Women who find themselves in situations of gender-based violence often face a number of significant obstacles when seeking medical assistance. These barriers, characterized by a wide range of manifestations and degrees of intensity, substantially complicate the victims' recovery process, while at the same time contributing to maintaining the aggressors' impunity (CALLOU; DE CASTRO MAGALHÃES; ALBUQUERQUE, 2021).

Many victims of gender-based violence experience deep feelings of apprehension regarding possible retaliation from the perpetrator. Additionally, the shame that is often associated with exposing their circumstances of abuse often inhibits them from seeking medical assistance or reporting the incident to health professionals (FERNANDES, 2022).

In many cases of domestic violence, women are financially dependent on the aggressor, becoming economic hostages of the situation. This prevents them from accessing medical services or breaking out of the cycle of abuse because they fear losing necessary financial support. Furthermore, gender-based violence is often accompanied by social isolation, with the aggressor deliberately distancing victims

from friends and family. This significantly reduces their support networks and makes it even more difficult to seek help, as they often find themselves isolated and without resources to seek medical assistance (MARQUES, 2023).

Some women may not be aware of available resources or unaware of their rights in relation to gender-based violence. This lack of information can be a significant obstacle to seeking appropriate medical help or support. On the other hand, not all health professionals are properly trained to identify and deal with cases of gender-based violence. This can result in inappropriate or insensitive responses from healthcare providers, which discourages victims from seeking help.

The social stigma that still exists in relation to victims of gender-based violence can lead women to fear judgment from health professionals and society in general. This fear often acts as a discouragement to seeking help. Furthermore, women from minority communities or who do not speak the local language may face additional challenges when seeking medical assistance (FERNANDES, 2022).

In many regions, resources for victims of gender-based violence, such as safe shelters or counseling services, can be scarce. This can make it difficult to seek help and leave the abusive situation, leaving victims in a vulnerable situation. It must also be noted that the lack of accountability for aggressors can discourage women from reporting cases of violence, as many believe that the justice system will not protect them. This creates a cycle of impunity that perpetuates violence (FERNANDES, 2022).

To overcome these barriers and ensure that victims of gender-based violence receive the necessary support, it is essential that there is coordinated action by society, health institutions and government authorities. This includes promoting public awareness,

adequately training health professionals, creating support networks, and implementing policies that ensure victims are protected and perpetrators are held accountable. Continuous education about women's rights and available resources plays a fundamental role in removing these barriers and building safer and more equal societies for all (VERONEZI et al., 2021).

Emergency medical care is essential to evaluate and treat physical injuries resulting from violence, such as bruises, fractures, cuts and burns. Victims of domestic or sexual violence often suffer serious injuries that require immediate medical care. Adequate treatment not only alleviates the victim's suffering, but can also save lives in serious cases (RODRIGUES et al., 2022).

In cases of sexual violence, emergency medical care plays a critical role in collecting forensic evidence. This includes obtaining samples for DNA analysis, which can be used in criminal investigations and later court proceedings. Collecting evidence is essential to seek justice and hold perpetrators accountable (VERONEZI et al., 2021).

In addition to the physical aspects, emergency medical care can offer psychological and emotional support to victims. Trained health professionals can provide a safe environment for victims to express their feelings, fears and concerns, helping them deal with the emotional trauma of violence (RODRIGUES et al., 2022).

It is worth mentioning that the emergency medical team is well positioned to refer victims to specialized services, such as centers for victims of domestic or sexual violence, psychological counseling and legal support. These services play a fundamental role in the recovery and continued protection of victims (RODRIGUES et al., 2022).

Furthermore, medical records made during emergency care may be used as documented

evidence in future legal proceedings. This clinical documentation is important to establish a history of abuse and support the victim's allegations before the competent authorities (VERONEZI et al., 2021).

When appropriate and with the victim's consent, healthcare professionals can notify authorities about incidents of violence. This can speed up legal intervention and protect the victim from future abuse. It is highlighted that emergency medical care can also play a role in education and prevention of violence against women. Healthcare professionals can inform victims about their rights, available resources and how to seek help. Furthermore, they can raise awareness among the community about the impacts of gender-based violence and how to prevent it (RODRIGUES et al., 2022).

Therefore, emergency medical care plays a multifaceted and crucial role in supporting victims of violence against women. In addition to treating physical injuries, it provides emotional support, collects forensic evidence, refers to specialist services and plays a key role in seeking justice and preventing gender-based violence. It is essential that victims have access to this quality care and that health professionals are properly trained to deal with cases of gender-based violence in a sensitive and effective way (VERONEZI et al., 2021).

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

To achieve its purpose, this study strongly emphasized the urgent need to adopt measures to combat violence against women in all its various manifestations, since gender-based violence constitutes a violation of the fundamental principles of human rights and constitutes as a global pandemic affecting women of all age groups, ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic levels. This problem is intricate and deeply rooted, however, it is imperative to recognize that it is not an insurmountable challenge.

Studies indicate that many health professionals are still not prepared to deal with violence against women, presenting difficulties in diagnosis, notification and appropriate referral. Furthermore, stigma and lack of sensitivity regarding the issue can reinforce the cycle of violence. However, good practices were also identified, such as the training of health professionals, the creation of care protocols and coordination with other care network services, and adequate care for their recovery.

Medical care in the emergency service can be an opportunity to care for women who are victims of violence, but it is necessary to guarantee the training of health professionals and coordination with other care network services. Violence against women must be treated as a public health issue, with the development of public policies that guarantee humanized and interdisciplinary care.

Therefore, to effectively address this problem, it is imperative to adopt a comprehensive and coordinated approach, which encompasses the participation of government entities, civil society organizations, health institutions, judicial systems and the community in general. This covers several spheres of activity: Awareness and the educational process play a fundamental role in modifying harmful attitudes and behaviors. Promoting public understanding of gender-based violence and its consequences must begin early, whether at school or in communities. Ensuring access to adequate medical care is of paramount importance, especially in cases related to gender-based violence, where victims often require urgent assistance. Ensuring that this assistance is accessible and gender-sensitive is an essential step.

The provision of legal assistance and access to the justice system are essential pillars in the quest to hold perpetrators accountable and safeguard victims. It is imperative that

victims have legal services available to assist them in seeking protection and justice measures. Furthermore, psychosocial support and the establishment of support networks play a crucial role in the recovery process of victims. Care centers dedicated to victims of domestic and sexual violence provide a safe environment in which victims can express their feelings and seek emotional support.

Therefore, prioritizing the prevention of gender-based violence must be constant. This

encompasses awareness programs, education initiatives that promote positive understanding of gender issues and the promotion of gender equality from childhood. The existence of strict legislation that criminalizes both gender-based violence and gender discrimination is extremely important. Furthermore, it is essential to implement public policies that not only promote gender equality, but also ensure the protection of victims.

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