

Bridging Disciplines: Applying Research on Intimate Partner Violence to Medical and Bioarchaeological Contexts

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Abstract

Intimate partner violence is a global human rights issue and leading public health crisis. In the United States, between 22% and 39% of women have experienced this type of abuse, and intimate partner violence is responsible for over 200,000 emergency room visits each year. As studies suggest an increase in the severity of intimate partner violence injuries overtime, it is likely that victims will seek medical treatment as abuse becomes more deadly, and it is therefore important for healthcare providers to recognize their ability to identify and intervene to prevent intimate partner homicides. As part of this call, the healthcare field has emphasized the need for medical personnel who are especially equipped to handle cases of sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse. This paper examines the role of forensic nurses in intimate partner violence intervention and how their case documentation informs clinical research on physical abuse patterns. This paper aims to provide an overview of intimate partner violence injuries described in the clinical literature and addresses sex and age distribution, injury etiology and severity, and associated health conditions. Finally, it considers how an expanded application of this research to the field of bioarchaeology can explore the question of intimate partner violence in past societies by applying physical injury patterns to skeletal remains and describes two studies that utilize this approach.

Keywords: bioarchaeology; forensic nurses; identification; intimate partner violence; trauma