

PRESS RELEASE

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Nevada Network Against Domestic Violence Recognizes Women's Health Week

World Health Organization recognizes Intimate Partner Violence as global health concern

In honor of [National Women's Health Week](#) May 8th through May 14th, the [Nevada Network Against Domestic Violence](#) (NNADV), along with its member programs statewide, acknowledge the deep impact of violence on women's lives and overall health. The theme of this year's health week, coordinated by the [Office on Women's Health](#), is "It's Your Time," empowering women to make their health a top priority, including finding the right resources as well as effective healthcare providers.

"Considering the fact that nearly [one in four women](#) will be victims of domestic abuse at some point in their lifetime, we need to ensure that we are moving women toward safer and healthier lives through education, community resources, and informed health care providers," says Sue Meuschke, Executive Director of the NNADV. "Part of that effort is giving health care professionals the proper tools to recognize and address abuse in their patients."

According to the [National Network to End Domestic Violence](#) (NNEDV), hospitals and health clinics can play a key early intervention role for victims of domestic and sexual violence. When health care professionals recognize the signs of abuse, they can connect survivors with local resources and victim advocates. Consider these signs and the ultimate impact of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) on health care, courtesy of [Futures Without Violence](#), the [World Health Organization](#), and the [NNEDV](#):

- Physical and psychological abuse are linked to a number of adverse physical effects including arthritis, chronic neck or back pain, migraine and other frequent headaches, stammering, problems in seeing, sexually transmitted infections, chronic pelvic pain, and stomach ulcers.
- In addition to the immediate trauma caused by abuse, IPV contributes to chronic health problems including depression, alcohol and substance abuse, and can limit the ability of victims to manage other chronic illnesses such as diabetes and hypertension.
- The costs of IPV exceeded \$5.8 billion in 1995. Updated to 2003 dollars, that's more than \$8.3 billion.

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- Violence by an intimate partner is the leading cause of non-fatal injuries to women in the U.S.
- A study published in 2003, found that 44 percent of IPV victims talked to someone about the abuse; 37 percent talked to their health care provider.

Healthcare providers are in a unique position to recognize and address exposure to abuse, according to Meuschke, who says they can empower patients through careful listening and assessment, and then referring them to the appropriate services. Long-time domestic violence advocate Allan Ebbin, M.D., M.P.H, Vice President of Healthcare Quality & Education, [UnitedHealthcare Nevada Market](#), concurs.

"All of us in the health professions have a privileged responsibility to prevent domestic violence. We can ask our patients directly about abuse, we can assist with access to specialized services and we can support them in changing their situation," says Ebbin, a member of NNADV's Health Care Leadership Team.

In fact, medical providers can do the following:

- Ask patients about physical, sexual and psychological abuse as part of their medical history and inquire upon each visit.
- Be aware of the dangers of IPV during pregnancy. IPV may be amplified during this time or there may be evidence of birth control sabotage. Clinical studies have proven the effectiveness of a private, confidential, two-minute screening for early detection of abuse in pregnant women. Other studies have tested a 10-minute intervention that was proven highly effective in increasing their safety.
- Remember **RADAR**: **R**outinely screen all patients, **A**sk direct questions, **D**ocument your findings, **A**ssess patient safety, and **R**evue options and referrals.

For more information on IPV and to order RADAR screening cards for your staff, contact the NNADV office. The NNADV also offers a Resource Center featuring books, DVDs, and manuals on a range of domestic violence-related topics, including those related to intimate partner violence and health issues, including those in the healthcare setting.

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About NNADV: The Nevada Network Against Domestic Violence was founded in 1980 to work toward the elimination of domestic and sexual violence against all persons. As Nevada's statewide coalition, NNADV is an inclusive network which both supports our member programs, and educates the public at large. Our agency is Reno-based, but our member programs span the entire state. NNADV hosts the Health Care Leadership Team, a group of industry professionals who convene quarterly to focus on policy, outreach, education and protocols to address domestic violence in the healthcare setting.