

## Building an international consensus to guide GP management of the whole family when partner violence is present

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A new state-wide resource for general practitioners (GPs) has been published and disseminated by the Victorian Department of Justice as an offshoot of the MOSAIC project. The booklet 'Management of the Whole Family When Intimate Partner Violence Is Present: Guidelines for General Practitioners in Victoria' was funded by the Victorian Community Council against Violence and is the result of an international collaboration between MOSAIC investigators Angela Taft and Kelsey Hegarty and their colleagues in England, Canada, the United States, and the Netherlands. An international PDF version has also been developed and will be considered for endorsement by primary care clinician organisations in each country. The guidelines have been endorsed by the Royal Australian College of General Practice (RACGP).

MOSAIC targets women who are pregnant or have children under five. It is located in primary care and participating GPs and maternal and child health nurses identify and refer women to the project. The development of this resource was motivated by the fact that GPs are often the first source of potential help for women experiencing intimate partner violence.

Women frequently attend when they are pregnant, or with small children and for their own needs. GPs are family doctors, and as such, they also see the perpetrator in the family and the children and adolescents. However, very little advice has addressed the serious dilemmas GPs face when dealing with the victim, her partner and the rest of the family. Additionally, guidelines and training for GPs to resolve the dilemmas about management of all family members when there is partner violence are not currently available in any of the literature. This project therefore aimed to:

- develop consensus clinical guidelines on GP management of the whole family when partner violence is present in diverse communities
- develop an innovative, culturally sensitive curriculum for GP whole-of-family management of partner violence based on the guidelines
- pilot and evaluate this curriculum and the guidelines with Victorian GPs in the MOSAIC project.

We undertook a systematic review of existing guidelines (1999-2004). Each guideline was assessed using AGREE criteria (Appraisal of Guidelines for Research and Evaluation). We retained guidelines if they fulfilled four of six of the AGREE criteria. Only nine of 52 identified guidelines met the criteria. Angela and Kelsey independently scored the guidelines according to AGREE criteria. We retained recommendations with consensus across three or more guidelines and drafted new recommendations where there were gaps. We then invited eight colleagues from three continents with published expertise around primary care management of victims, perpetrators or children in families experiencing IPV to participate. All agreed. Via surveys and international teleconferences, we sought consensus around all recommendations using an adapted Delphi process and accepted those with a mean of seven to nine. We then undertook a limited consultation with stakeholders in each participating country to check the guidelines' relevance and any stakeholder concerns.

There was controversy around recommendations for screening or case-finding of victims, perpetrators or children, with colleagues in the USA supporting the screening of every woman and girl. Participants in all the remaining countries (including those of us in Australia) supported limited case-finding until effective training and systems support for staff to manage the issue appropriately were more widespread. For the overwhelming number of other recommendations there was consensus about GP management of victims and those addressing major gaps in management of the male partner, children, the couple and management of the overall clinic.

With no other evidence to inform policy, service delivery or good practice, consensus guidelines are vital to guide current GP practice around this prevalent problem. The consensus from these guidelines will inform GP education, service delivery and good practice. MOSAIC has developed and implemented a new curriculum and training for participating GPs based on recommendations in the guidelines. This training is currently being evaluated and a copy of the guidelines will be sent to MOSAIC GPs in the coming months.

The guidelines will be accessible through the RACGP website <http://www.racgp.org.au/document.asp?id=21290>

