

POSTER ABSTRACTS

10th Annual HMO Research Network Conference

May 3-5, 2004 Dearborn, MI

Women's Health 26

Comparison of Two Domestic Violence Classification Tools Among Female HMO Enrollees

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Background: Coker and colleagues report that the Women's Experience with Battering (WEB) scale is broadly applicable as a classification tool for domestic violence (DV). In the present study, we compare the WEB to 5 questions commonly administered as part of the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS) to estimate DV prevalence and the false negative and false positive rates of the WEB in female enrollees of Group Health Cooperative (GHC).

Methods: We conducted telephone interviews with 806 women (mean age, 45) randomly sampled from GHC, who had an intimate partner since age 18, to estimate DV prevalence and to calculate the false negative and positive rates of the WEB. Five BRFSS questions (yes/no) assessed lifetime and current partner exposure to physical, sexual (forced intercourse or sexual contact) and psychological (threats or controlling behavior) DV. The 10-item WEB scale assessed women's perceived loss of power and control in their current or past relationships; scores greater than 20 (single item score range, 1-6) indicated exposure. Considering women in a current relationship, the false negative and false positive rates for the WEB were calculated, using the BRFSS physical/sexual and psychological (threats/controlling behavior) items as gold standards.

Results: 43% (351/806) of women reported lifetime DV exposure (responded yes to at least one of five BRFSS items), and 26% (207/806) were positive on the WEB. 15% (97/650) of women reported DV in their current relationship via the BRFSS items, and 4.5% (29/650) via the WEB scale. The false negative rate for the WEB (current relationship) was 80% (40/50) against the BRFSS physical/sexual items and 75% (60/80) against the BRFSS psychological items. The false positive rate for the WEB was 3% (BRFSS physical/sexual) and 1.5% (BRFSS psychological).

Conclusions: Our results suggest that between 75 and 80 percent of women who experience physical, sexual or psychological DV in their current relationship would be missed if the WEB is used as a classification tool for characterizing abuse. We will continue to compare the WEB and BRFSS items as additional data are obtained in our study of 7,000 randomly selected female enrollees of Group Health Cooperative.