

Confronting Chronic Neglect: The Education and Training of Health Professionals on Family Violence

Committee on the Training Needs of Health Professionals to Respond to Family Violence

Health professionals are often the first to encounter victims of family violence, but little is being done to educate them to deal effectively with this problem. Although curricula exist, training is not consistently offered to those who care for family violence victims. When offered, it is typically of short duration, offered at only one point in the health education program, and frequently limited to only one type of violence. The problem of elder maltreatment is a particularly neglected area in training.

Confronting Chronic Neglect: The Education and Training of Health Professionals on Family Violence, a new report from the Institute of Medicine, recommends ways to improve training opportunities and help health professionals screen, diagnose, treat, and refer victims of abuse and neglect. It calls for systematic and rigorous evaluation of existing programs and model approaches. The report offers four major recommendations:

1. Creation of family violence centers to conduct research on the impact of family violence on the health care system and evaluate and test training and education programs for health professionals. The centers should be established by the Department of Health and Human Services and modeled after similar multidisciplinary centers in fields such as injury control research, Alzheimer's disease, and geriatric education. To lay the foundation for the centers' coordinating role, the report suggests that the U.S. General Accounting Office analyze the level and adequacy of existing investments in family violence research and training.
2. Health professional organizations and educators – including academic health center faculty – should address core competency areas for health professional curricula on family violence; effective teaching strategies; approaches to overcoming barriers to training; and approaches to promote and sustain behavior changes by health professionals in dealing with family violence.
3. Health care delivery systems and training settings, particularly academic health care centers and federally qualified health clinics and community health centers, should assume greater responsibility for developing, testing, and evaluating innovative training models or programs.
4. Federal agencies and other funders of education programs should create expectations and provide support and incentives for evaluating curricula on family violence for health professionals. Evaluations should focus on the impact of training on the practices of health professionals and the effects on family violence victims.

Health professionals alone cannot solve this complex problem. The report encourages society as a whole to pay greater attention to the tragedy of family violence.



Confronting Chronic Neglect: The Education and Training of Health Professionals on Family Violence is available for \$39.95 from the National Academy Press, 2101 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Box 285, Washington, DC 20055; call (800) 624-6242 or (202) 334-3313 (in the Washington metropolitan area), or visit the NAP's online bookstore at www.nap.edu. Prepublication copies are also available for \$45.00.

For more information about the Institute of Medicine, visit the IOM home page at www.iom.edu. The full text of *Confronting Chronic Neglect: The Education and Training of Health Professionals on Family Violence* is available on line at www.nap.edu/readingroom.

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