

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AS A CAUSE OF PRENATAL ANXIETY

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**D**omestic violence is a pattern of behavior involving violence or abuse by one or more persons against another person in domestic setting. Globally the victims are mostly women. Pregnancy is a time when domestic abuse often starts or increases. Hormonal changes make them more vulnerable to anxiety/depression particularly when there are victims of physical, emotional or mental abuse. In Pakistan 30% of women dying of domestic violence are pregnant. A study was carried out at Ghurki Trust Teaching Hospital/ Lahore Medical and Dental College from January 2015 to December 2016. All pregnant women presenting to OBGYN OPD with complaints, symptoms and signs of anxiety and/ or abuse were included. Patients on known antipsychotic treatment were excluded. A total of 23,455 pregnant patients came to the OPD for antenatal checkup. On detailed history and examination 12,197 (52%) were found to be victims of violence. Most victims, 10,245 (84%) were anxious. Various causes of anxiety were identified as having female children only, one son only, failing pregnancies, h/o having had an abnormal baby, previous traumatic or operative delivery. In postpartum period such patients are candidates for maternity blues, depression and puerperal psychosis. 228 patients (2.22%) presented with a history of one or more miscarriages previously; while 332 patients (3.24%) came with preterm labour. Apart from close monitoring of the pregnancy, counseling/reassurance of the patient, husband and family was carried out. In addition to psychological support, selective non responsive patients were prescribed low doses of anti-anxiety drugs in consultation with the psychiatrist. Violence against women is much more common than perceived and gynecologists may be the first person to come across this problem. Medical personal should be aware of the problem and provide education, awareness and intervention for prevention of this problem.

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