

Family Violence – recognising and responding in General Practice through routine enquiry

Helen Clark former NZ Prime Minister at the National Council of Women conference in Auckland last year made the following statement:

“New Zealand may have the worst rate of violence against women in the developed world. The government needs to recognise that violence against women is a national crisis and make a determined effort to "fix it".

My talk addresses what the role of GPs and practice nurses is in addressing the issue of family violence in our communities. We are uniquely placed to ask about FV in our everyday work. We can learn to recognise signs and symptoms in people that are living with violence and we need to be able to support and respond when they disclose to us.

I will talk about how to incorporate routine enquiry for FV into our daily practice much like we do for other important health issues like smoking. We will also discuss the importance of the whole practice being on board, understanding what we mean by “family violence” and “intimate partner violence” and how non-medical staff might recognise this in patients.