

Australian Medical Association Limited

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STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN – AMA

White Ribbon Day (International Day of the Elimination of Violence against Women) 2015

On White Ribbon Day 2015, the AMA reiterates its strong support for measures that stop violence against women.

White Ribbon Day is Australia’s only national, male-led campaign to end violence against women.

AMA President, Professor Brian Owler, said today that the AMA has made domestic violence a priority issue for the Association and the medical profession.

“The AMA and the medical profession are committed to supporting victims of family violence, and will work with governments, authorities, and advocates to overcome this scourge in the Australian community,” Professor Owler said.

“All women have the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

“Across Australia, it is estimated that more than half the total population of women have experienced some form of physical or sexual violence in their lifetime.

“This is unacceptable for a sophisticated nation like Australia.

“The mental and physical health consequences of domestic violence in women are well known.

“Children who grow up witnessing and experiencing domestic violence can also be profoundly affected. The most prevalent effect is on mental health, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, and substance abuse.

“Doctors have a key role to play in the early detection, intervention, and treatment of patients who have experienced family violence.

“Women experiencing domestic violence will tell GPs more often than any other professional group.

“Domestic violence occurs in all suburbs and across all socio-economic groups, ages, and cultural and ethnic boundaries.”

“White Ribbon Day helps put domestic violence at the centre of public awareness, and highlights the need for a whole-of-community response to domestic violence,” Professor Owler said.

Professor Owler, AMA NSW President, Dr Saxon Smith, and Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty, last month launched the AMA NSW *Share Your Story* campaign, which encourages those suffering domestic violence to speak with their doctor about their experiences.

The AMA is currently updating its Position Statement on Domestic Violence, with a view to releasing the update in April 2016.

In May this year, the AMA launched an important new resource - *Supporting Patients Experiencing Family Violence: A Resource for Medical Practitioners*- to assist doctors to provide better support for victims of family violence. It is available at <https://ama.com.au/article/ama-family-violence-resource>

Background (from the White Ribbon website)

- over 12 months, on average, one woman is killed every week as a result of intimate partner violence;
- a woman is most likely to be killed by her partner in her home;
- domestic and family violence is the principal cause of homelessness for women and their children;
- intimate partner violence is the leading contributor to death, disability, and ill-health in Australian women aged 15-44;
- one in three women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence perpetrated by someone known to them;
- one in four children are exposed to domestic violence, which is a recognised form of child abuse;
- one in five women experience harassment within the workplace; and
- one in five women over 18 has been stalked during her lifetime.

People experiencing domestic and family violence or sexual assault can get help by contacting their family doctor or by calling:

- 000 - if you, a child, or another person is in immediate danger
- 1800 RESPECT – 1800 737 732
- Relationships Australia – 1300 364 277
- Mensline – 1300 789 978

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