**Background**

Around the world at least one woman in every three has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime (UNIFEM, 2008a; Kidman, 2010). Pregnancy has been identified as a risk period with increased tension in couple relationships and subsequently often results in acts of violence. Violence against women is implicitly accepted in many societies, hidden behind doors and by walls of silence. Antenatal domestic violence is a risk factor for low birth weight deliveries, ante-partum hospitalizations, induced and spontaneous abortions and other injuries. One woman in four worldwide has been abused during pregnancy. Studies indicate that 22% of women in the US admit partner abuse during pregnancy. 

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**Objective**

The broad objective is to explore undocumented antenatal domestic violence in rural Kentucky.

**Design and Method**

A non-experimental, exploratory, descriptive design

**Setting**

Data collection was conducted in Whitley County Kentucky where 26% of the residents live below the poverty level and unemployment rates are above 10%. Infant death rates are 11.4/1000 live births versus the state average of 7.8/1000. The data was collected on the postnatal unit of the hospital in Corbin, Kentucky. Data was collected from a convenience sample of participants. The postnatal nurses at the hospital assisted in identifying women who have delivered and who meet the inclusion criteria. All patient visitors were asked to leave the room and the woman was asked about her willingness to participate. The researcher remained in the patient room until data collection was completed to assure privacy and protection for the participant.

After completing the survey the participant placed the survey in an envelope and sealed it before giving it to the researcher.

**Data Collection**

Data was collected from a convenience sample of participants. The postnatal nurses at the hospital assisted in identifying women who have delivered and who meet the inclusion criteria. All patient visitors were asked to leave the room and the woman was asked about her willingness to participate. The researcher remained in the patient room until data collection was completed to assure privacy and protection for the participant.

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**Data collection Instrument**

A closed ended structured anonymous questionnaire was used to collect data related to the frequency of domestic violence during their pregnancy. The questionnaire is divided into four parts. Part one has 21 items examining personal demographics of client and partner. Part two consists of 9 items related to the women’s safety. Part three consists of 3 items from The Psychological Maltreatment of Women inventory. And 16 items in the Severity of Violence Inventory. Part four consists of 16 items examining the frequency of abusive behavior.

Completion of survey ranged from 10-15 minutes.

**Data Analysis**

Data was entered in Excel

Descriptive Statistics were run on all variables

Completion of survey ranged from 10-15 minutes.

**Results**

Sample n=96

Maternal Age: range 15-40 with a mean of 23. Education Level- 62% had a high school

Marital status: 50 married, 38 single, 7 divorced

Paternal Age: range 18-45, mean 27

Education Level: 65% high school

Number of years in relationship: 1-15 years, mean 4.5

*Physical Abuse*

All the women denied physical abuse. However areas of emotional abuse emerged.

*Control Of Finances*

Participants reported failure to provide adequate finances and lack of ability to participate in financial decision making.

* Limit Socialization and Activities*

Respondents noted that “interfered with family relationships”, restricted car and movement from home”, and “tried to keep me from doing things to improve myself”

* Tried to Convince Woman She was Crazy*

The participants reported their partner “told her that her feelings were irrational or crazy” “tried to make her feel crazy” and “tried to convince her she was crazy”.

**Data**

Data was entered in Excel

Descriptive Statistics were run on all variables

Completion of survey ranged from 10-15 minutes.

**Conclusions**

The overall incidence of domestic abuse reported by the participants was low however the data supports further investigation into “emotional and financial abuse”. Women are screened and treated for obvious violent abuse however the scars and damage from emotional abuse are damaging forever and warrant further investigation and management.

**References**

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