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## **Researchers Find Witnessing Intimate Partner Violence as Children Does Not Increase Risk of Victimization as Adults, But Find Link to Abuse in Childhood**

In a paper presented at the 2006 Society for Academic Emergency Medicine Annual Meeting in San Francisco, researchers reported on the results of testing the hypothesis that those exposed to IPV (intimate partner violence) as child witnesses are at an increased risk of victimization in adulthood. In the study, 280 consecutive people who came to an Emergency Department in Albuquerque, New Mexico were asked to anonymously relate whether they had witnessed IPV as a child and whether their own children had witnessed IPV.

Researchers used a touch-screen computer requiring no contact with healthcare personnel to decrease interviewer/observational bias and data entry mistakes. In addition to questions about previously witnessing IPV as children, the study team administered the OVAT (Ongoing Violence Assessment Tool) screening tool. The OVAT has been validated against the Index of Spousal Abuse, a long but extremely accurate screening method for ongoing intimate partner violence victimization.

The results of this study did not support the hypothesis that Adult Child Witnesses (Adult-CWs) were more likely to become adult victims of IPV. Correlation of Adult-CWs with IPV was not statistically significant, with 32% of Adult-CWs and 21% of the non-Adult-CWs positive for IPV. However, the Adult-CWs were 9 times more likely to have been abused as a child.

The authors comment, "The cycle of adult violence in IPV does not appear to be perpetuated from witnessing IPV as a child to victimization as an adult. We predict Adult-CWs may be more likely to become perpetrators of IPV. This is the planned screening for our next study. And finally, while our study does not demonstrate a link between adults having witnessed abuse as

children and being in a current ongoing abusive relationship, we did show that Adult-CWs were more likely to be abused as children. So while we are not able to state that being an Adult-CW leads to being in an abusive relationship as a victim in adulthood, we must remember that adults who are currently in an abusive relationship should have children screened for being abused and witnessing IPV in the household.”

The presentation is “Witnessing IPV as a child does not increase likelihood of becoming an adult IPV victim.” The authors are Amy A Ernst MD, Steven J Weiss MD, Christie M DelCastillo MD, Ross M Clark, Shanna M Combs, Juliet D’Angelo, Alexander Feuchter, Michael Hegyi, Brittany Coffman, and Eduardo Marvez-Valls MD. For more information on this study, contact Linda Gruner at [l.gruner@elsevier.com](mailto:l.gruner@elsevier.com), or 212-633-3923.

*(Source: Society for Academic Emergency Medicine)*