Barriers among Danish women and general practitioners to raising the issue of intimate partner violence in General Practise: A qualitative study
Trine Mørk

T Mørk1, P Andersen2, A Taket3
1Institute of Marketing and Organisation, Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark
2Unit of Health Promotion Research, University of Southern Denmark, Esbjerg, Denmark
3School of Health and Social Development, Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia
Contact: tmork@badm.au.dk

Background
Thirty-five percent of Danish women experience sexual or physical violence in their lifetime. Survivors of IPV identify medical doctors as the healthcare professionals from whom
they would most likely seek help. However, health care professionals are not in the practice of asking about intimate partner violence (IPV) in Denmark. It is currently unknown what hinders general practitioners from asking about partner violence and how Danish women would perceive such an inquiry. This aspect has not previously been explored in Denmark. An exploratory study was conducted to examine what hinders general practitioners (GPs) from asking and what Danish women’s views and attitudes are regarding being asked about IPV.

**Methods**

Data were collected through individual and group interviews with a sample of three GPs and a diverse sample of 13 women, including both survivors of partner violence and those without any history of partner violence. These respondent groups were selected given that they represent three different groups that would be directly affected by any procedural change regarding an inquiry about IPV in General Practice. An interpretative analysis was performed with the data.

**Results**

This study provides important knowledge regarding the barriers and attitudes towards inquiry about IPV in primary care in Denmark. Results indicate that Denmark is facing the same challenges when responding to survivors of IPV as other similar countries, including Sweden, Norway, the UK, USA, and Australia. Danish women want general practitioners to ask about violence in a respectful and non-judgemental manner. However, general practitioners are resistant towards such an inquiry and would benefit from training regarding how to respond to women who have been exposed to IPV.

**Conclusions**

It is acceptable to inquire about IPV with women in Denmark in a non-judgemental and respectful way. Informing about IPV prevalence is important prior to the inquiry. However, general practitioners require more awareness and training before a favourable environment for this change in procedure can be created. Further large-scale research is needed to support the evidence generated by this small study of importance in its field.

**Key message**

- Women preferred to be asked, as they do not know how to raise the issue themselves. In sum, the survivors of IPV are reluctant to disclose abuse and the GPs falsely believe that they can detect abuse.