

Trauma nurse specialist Miriam Ramirez noticed a disturbing pattern as she reviewed the charts of trauma patients at MacNeal Hospital in Berwyn. Many of the charts contained clues of domestic violence-related injuries: broken arms, facial fractures, sexual assaults. Some were obvious; others were subtle. But all needed closer scrutiny.

Ramirez, B.S.N., R.N., C.E.N., was concerned that some survivors were slipping through the cracks because they were too afraid to speak up. With the support of administration, she spearheaded the hospital's multidisciplinary Domestic Violence Task Force and forged partnerships with several community organizations.

The task force educates patients and caregivers about preventable trauma and injury. Throughout the year and especially during October—Domestic Violence Awareness Month—it hosts educational and community outreach activities.

Ramirez also has educated hospital staff about how to identify domestic violence survivors and improved their quality of care by moving patients to a private, dedicated screening area in the emergency department.

As a result, hospital-wide domestic violence screenings have improved and, upon release, assault survivors may receive:

- Social services;
- Police protection;
- Cab vouchers; and
- Follow-up care from a hospital crisis worker.

On average, 20 people are physically abused by intimate partners every minute in the U.S., according to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

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