



# The Need to Plan Mental Health First Aid Courses for Health Care Workers When Faced with Domestic Violence in Women

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## Dear Editor-in-Chief

Domestic violence against women is a severe public health hazard that is pervasive in many nations. Domestic violence is a vicious circle that traps victims and continues abuse, which not only exacerbates mental health issues but also makes people more vulnerable (1). About 30% of women globally report having experienced physical or sexual abuse at the hands of an intimate partner or by a non-partner at some point in their lives. Domestic violence against women is a pervasive problem. They have self-experience (2).

Domestic abuse of women is a severe health issue in Iran. A comprehensive analysis was carried out across the nation. According to the study's findings, 66% of cases of domestic abuse are thought to occur. According to the geographic classification, domestic violence prevalence ranges from 59% in Iran's center to 75% in its west (3). Domestic abuse victims are more likely to experience depression, suicide, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Stress, fear, and loneliness brought on by traumatic experiences might result in depression and suicidal thoughts or actions (4). Healthcare professionals get psychological first aid (PFA) training to prepare them to provide practical and emotional support

to those recently experienced stressful experiences (5).

PFA is not just carried out by mental health specialists (6). Instead, because they frequently come into contact with victims or potential victims of abuse when giving care to women and children, healthcare professionals—including doctors, nurses, and midwives—play a crucial role in tackling the issue of domestic violence against women. Adequate referrals and early detection of domestic violence can lessen the severe physical and psychological effects of abuse (2). In addition to prompt and suitable referrals, it is crucial to respond to victims of domestic abuse with empathy (7). Psychological first aid (PFA), which offers persons undergone severe stress emotional and practical help, has been proven in previous research to lessen the psychological cost of stress (8, 9).

PFA is a practical, compassionate, and helpful aid that honors the afflicted person's abilities, culture, and dignity; it is not a type of therapy. The mission of PFA is to empower individuals experienced trauma to feel safe, connected, at ease, and full of hope. It also aims to facilitate their access to coping mechanisms, collaborative services, and physical, emotional, and social support.



When used appropriately, PFA can boost accident victims' self-efficacy and resilience in the face of difficulty (9). The critical point of PFA is respect for safety, dignity, and human rights. Safety is a priority for both advocates and victims (6). In a previous study, the role of PFA in the development of PTSD after exposure to sexual assault was investigated. The findings of this study showed that perceived PFA was positively associated with fewer PTSD symptoms. Therefore, PFA is an adequate source of support for rape survivors (10).

Mental health first aid for healthcare providers when women encounter violence includes active listening, calming/reassurance, problem-solving/practical assistance, and social communication/referral (6). To address the critical issue of domestic violence against women, it is imperative to equip healthcare workers with the necessary skills and knowledge through mental health first aid courses. This approach not only provides immediate support to victims but also promotes a more responsive and empathetic healthcare environment. Enhanced training and awareness can significantly contribute to the well-being of women and ensure a more effective response to domestic violence.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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