Intimate Partner Violence in Rural Aging Women: Promoting Community Knowledge

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**Project Overview**

With the aging of the baby boom generation, the incidence and prevalence of intimate partner violence (IPV) among aging women is expected to increase significantly. Professionals often lack awareness of IPV in the later stages of life and are hesitant to take responsibility for getting involved in such a difficult issue. Community professionals need scientific information to further their understanding of the plight of aging women who experience IPV and assist them in determining the appropriate course of action for use by their communities to help aging women regain a healthier life without violence.

The purpose of this collaborative partnership between the Center for Gerontology at Virginia Tech (VT) and the Women’s Resource Center of the New River Valley (WRC) in Blacksburg, Virginia is to enhance service professionals’ knowledge of IPV of aging women as they engage in a process for developing a strategic model of intervention to address the needs of women in their community.

**AIM I**

Identify Empirical Research and Community-Based Programs Addressing IPV among Aging Women

**Tasks**
- Search scientific literature (1999-2009) using 10 primary search terms (e.g., intimate partner violence, domestic violence, spouse/spousal abuse, violence against women, elder abuse, etc.) with 3 age-related search terms (elderly, older adults, aging)
- Identify intersections of research and programming in aging, domestic violence, and elder abuse
- Develop educational materials on IPV in late life for community providers and laypersons

**Progress**
- Created database of 366 journal articles, reports, and internet resources divided into 46 subject categories
- Identified the nexus among the elder abuse, domestic violence, and gerontological literature
- Completed drafts of informational handouts and PowerPoint presentation for professional and lay audiences outlining professional and community responses to IPV

**Next Steps**
- Complete handouts and IPV PowerPoint presentation
- Post materials on research partner websites

**AIM II**

Project Prevalence of IPV among Aging Women Living in the New River Valley

**Tasks**
- Gather statistical data on the incidence and prevalence of IPV among aging women locally, statewide, and nationwide
- Project expected growth and prevalence of IPV among older adults in the NRV over the next 30 years

**Progress**
- Identified 34 sources with state and national level statistical data
- Established partnership with the Virginia Dept. Health to identify community-level data

**Next Steps**
- Ascertain prevalence of IPV among older women locally
- Project expected growth and prevalence of IPV among older women in the NRV over the next 30 years

**AIM III**

Obtain Perspectives on IPV from Community Professionals and Victims

**Tasks**
- Gather information from community professionals who may come in contact with older women who may be victims of IPV
- Interview women (age 50+) who have experienced IPV in the last 5 years

**Progress**
- Conducted focus groups and interviews with professionals from aging services organizations, law enforcement, faith-based community, department of social services, and the grant partner, Women’s Resource Center
- Interviewed 5 women (age 50+) who have experienced IPV in the last 5 years

**Next Steps**
- Conduct focus groups and interviews with mental health providers, community business owners, and medical community professionals including general practitioners, forensic nurses, EMTs, and emergency room physicians
- Conduct 5 additional interviews with women (age 50+) who have experienced IPV in the last 5 years
- Analyze transcripts for themes to use in model building (AIM IV)

**AIM IV**

Develop Strategic Plan with Community Partners to Address the Needs of Aging Women Experiencing IPV

**Tasks**
- Generate potential community models based on study findings

**Progress**
- Created database with community resources for model development
- Recruited members from local domestic violence task force for subcommittee to assist in development of community response models

**Next Steps**
- Synthesize findings from database, focus group, and interviews
- Develop potential intervention models with subcommittee
- Vet model ideas with local task force
- Finalize potential intervention models

Funded by Eunice Kennedy Shriver NICHD Grant # 1RO3HD059478
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Presented at the 2009 Partners in Research Meeting, Bethesda, MD