

# Incorporating Domestic Violence Survivors' Safety in Healthcare Practices

PRESENTED BY:  
AID TO VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE,  
INC.



# Disclosure:

[ Speaker: Jennifer Rey]

I have no actual or potential conflict of interest in relation to this program/presentation.



**AVDA**<sup>®</sup>

*A Community of Hope*

# Lingo

DV = Domestic Violence

IPV = Intimate Partner Violence

AVDA = Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse

# MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM

- DV is a leading cause of death and serious injury for women, as well as numerous physical and health issues for both men and women.
- Survivors of DV are disproportionately represented in ER, mental health, and other medical settings.
- Many do not report abuse, but seek health care.
- Health care setting is presumed to be a safe place for survivors to disclose and seek help.

# MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM

U.S. Department of Justice reported that 37% of all women who sought care in hospital emergency rooms for violence-related injuries were injured by a current or former spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend

Domestic violence is the leading cause of injuries to women ages 15-44

# M A G N I T U D E   O F T H E   P R O B L E M

- \$4.1 billion direct medical & mental health care services <sup>(1)</sup>
- Adjusted to \$8.3 billion for 2008 costs
- \$1.8 billion indirect cost lost wages
- 1/5 of all women medical visits are due to battering <sup>(1)</sup>

(2)

1. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). May, 2003.

[www.cdc.gov/ncipc/uub-res/ipv\\_cost/ipv.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/uub-res/ipv_cost/ipv.htm)

2. Randall, T., 1990. Domestic Violence Begets Other Problems of which Physicians must be Aware to be Effective, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, XL. Pp. 971-978.

# MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM

- For the first two years after the abuse ends, victims of DV have an average of \$1200 more in health care costs than non abused women
- In the third year after, about \$400 more than non abused women

"The prolonged impact of abuse on health care costs is consistent with what we find with people who quit smoking or abusing alcohol or drugs – the costs don't go back to normal for years"

Amy Bonomi, Professor at Ohio State University and Co-Author of this study published in Journal of General Internal Medicine.



A map of Florida with various cities and counties labeled. Overlaid on the map is white text providing statistics for DV incidents in 2019. The text is centered and reads: '2019', 'Florida had 105,298 reported DV incidents.', '223 of those were murder or manslaughter.', 'Palm Beach County had 4,633 DV offenses, 12 of which were murder or manslaughter.'

2019

Florida had 105,298 reported DV incidents.

223 of those were murder or manslaughter.

Palm Beach County had 4,633 DV offenses, 12 of which were murder or manslaughter.



A pair of ornate brass scales of justice is the central focus, set against a blurred background of a courtroom with rows of seats and a large window. The scales are positioned in the foreground, with the pans hanging from a central pillar. The lighting is soft, highlighting the intricate details of the scales.

# Florida Statute 741.28

**Defines Domestic Violence as any:**

Assault, aggravated assault, battery, aggravated battery, false imprisonment, OR any criminal offense resulting in physical injury or death of one household member by another family or household member.

# Florida Statute 741.28



**Family or Household Member means:**

**Spouses, former spouses, persons related by blood or marriage, persons who are presently residing together as if a family or who resided together in the past as if a family, and persons who are parents who have a child in common regardless of whether they have ever been married.**

**With the exception of persons who have a child in common, the family members must be currently residing or have in the past resided together in the same single unit dwelling.**





# Florida Statute 784.046

- A dating relationship must have existed within the past six months...
- Expectation of affection or sexual involvement by the parties...
- AND.. The frequency and type of interaction between the persons must have included that they have been involved over time and on a continuous basis over the course of the relationship.



# Domestic and Dating Violence Injunctions

- Violence only needs to occur once in order to apply for injunction.
- Must meet statutory definitions for domestic or dating violence.
- Valid in any state in the US once granted.
- Injunction can only be violated by perpetrator.
- Injunction can protect children, if necessary.
- Not all survivors are safe to apply for injunctions.

# PRACTICAL DYNAMICS OF DV

- DV is a pattern of behavior used to establish power and control over another person through fear, intimidation, often including the threat or use of violence.
- DV happens when one person believes they are entitled to control another.
- Assault, battering and domestic violence are crimes.



# GOALS OF HEALTHCARE RESPONSE:

## ARE:

- To provide informed, holistic and appropriate care
- To increase safety, reduce isolation, link victims and their families to additional services/support

## ARE NOT:

- To force survivors to disclose abuse or take particular action
- To make health care providers responsible for solving the problem or to find perfect, complete solutions.
- Make the survivor feel shame or guilt for not making a particular decision.

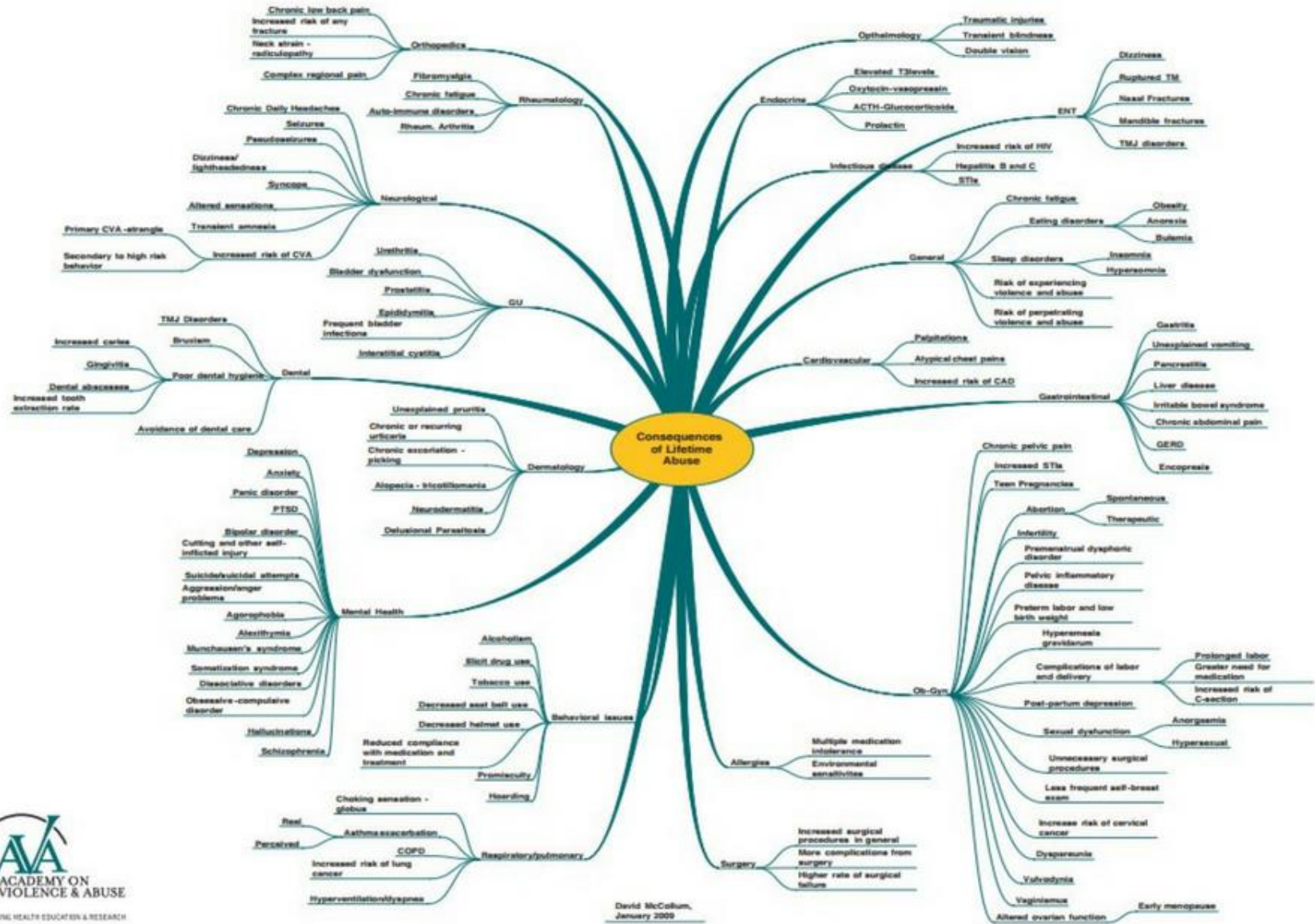




ADVANCING HEALTH EDUCATION & RESEARCH

# COLEVA

## Known and Suspected Consequences Of Lifetime Exposures to Violence and Abuse

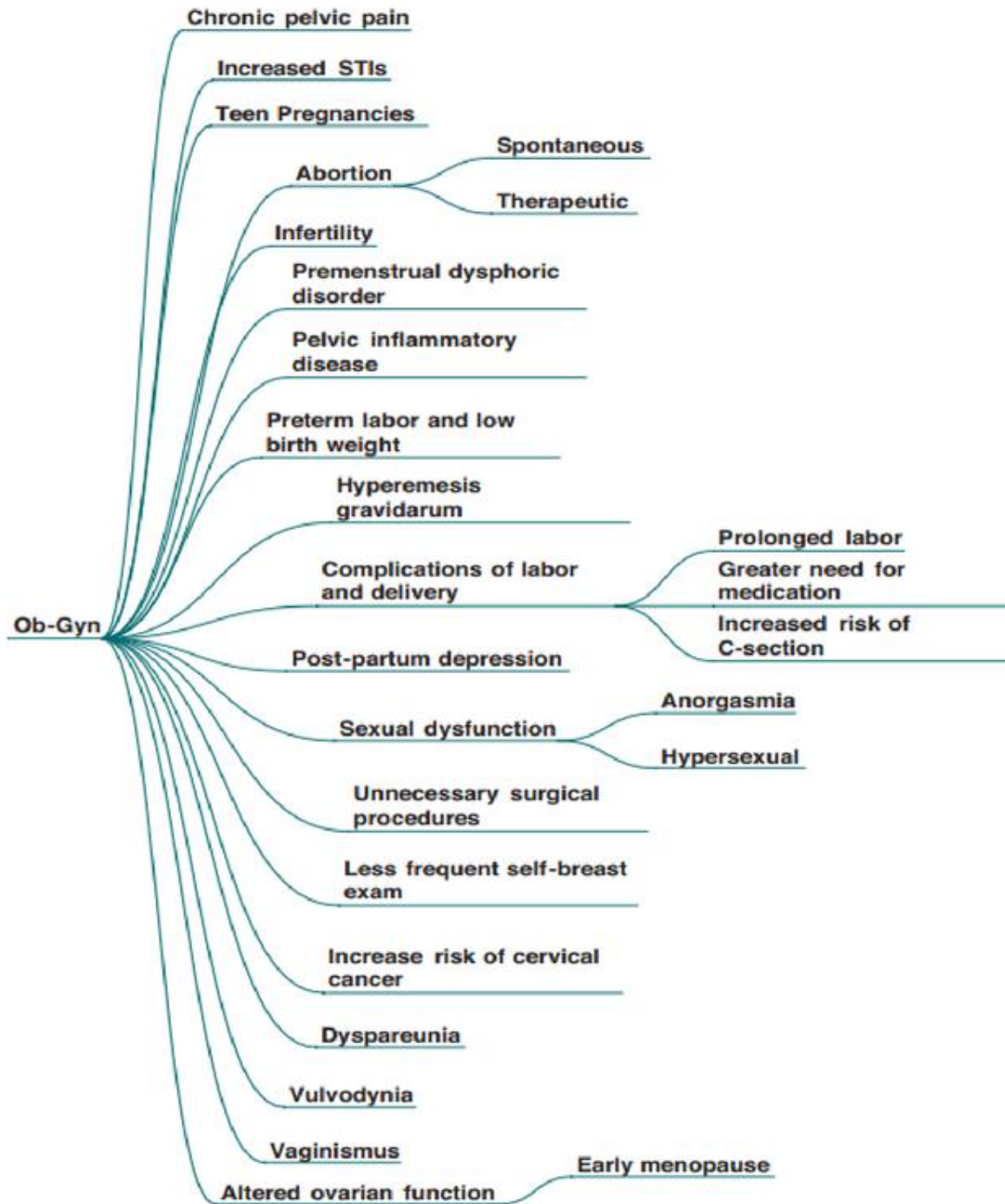


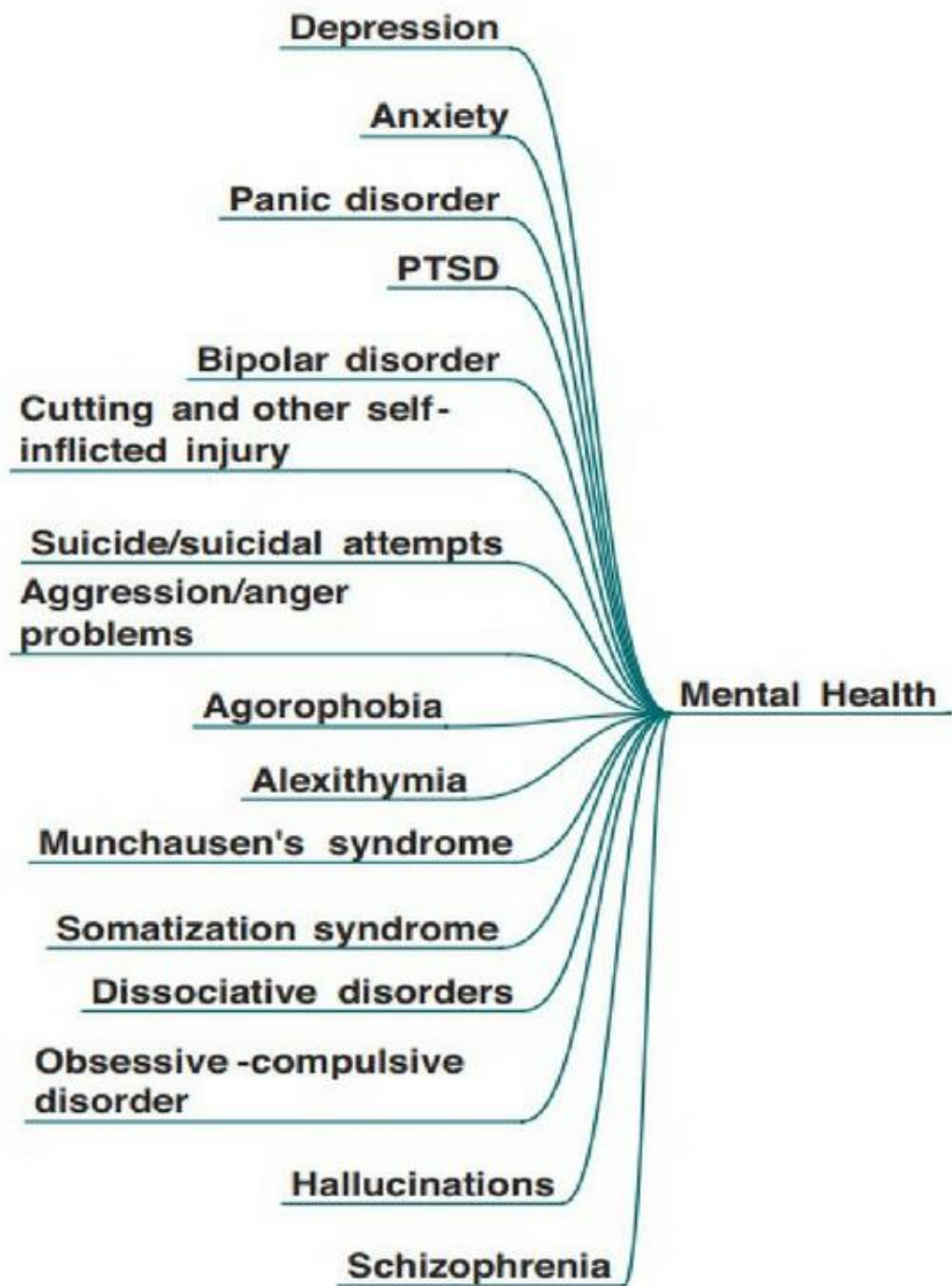
David McCollum, January 2009



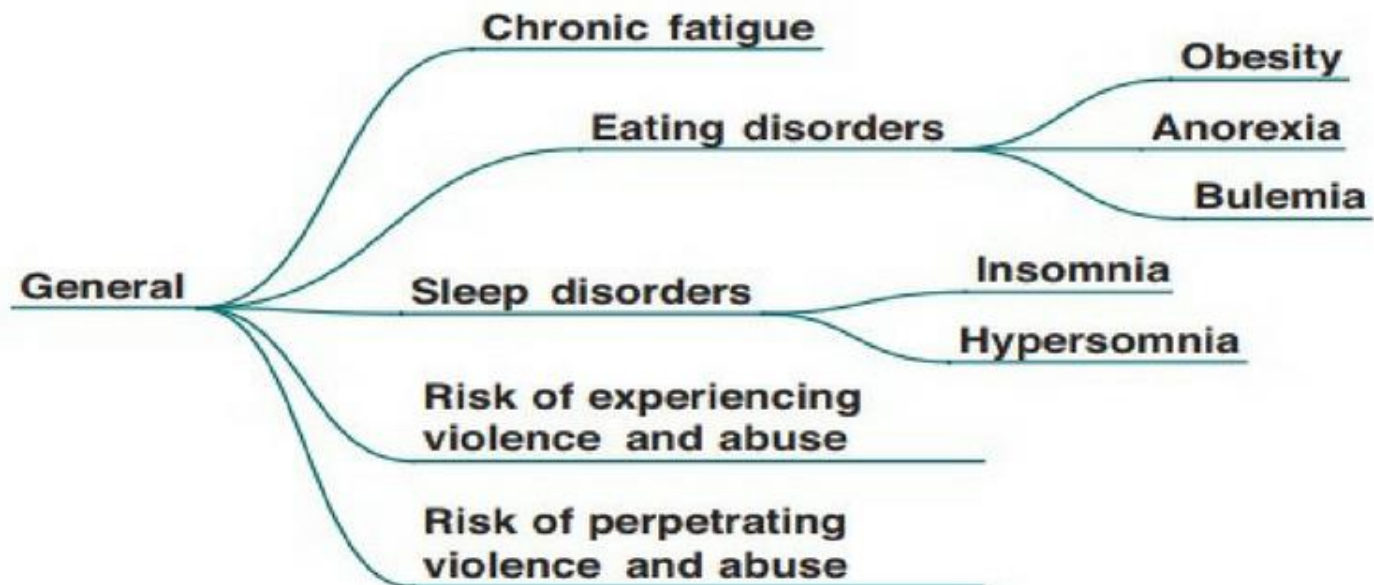
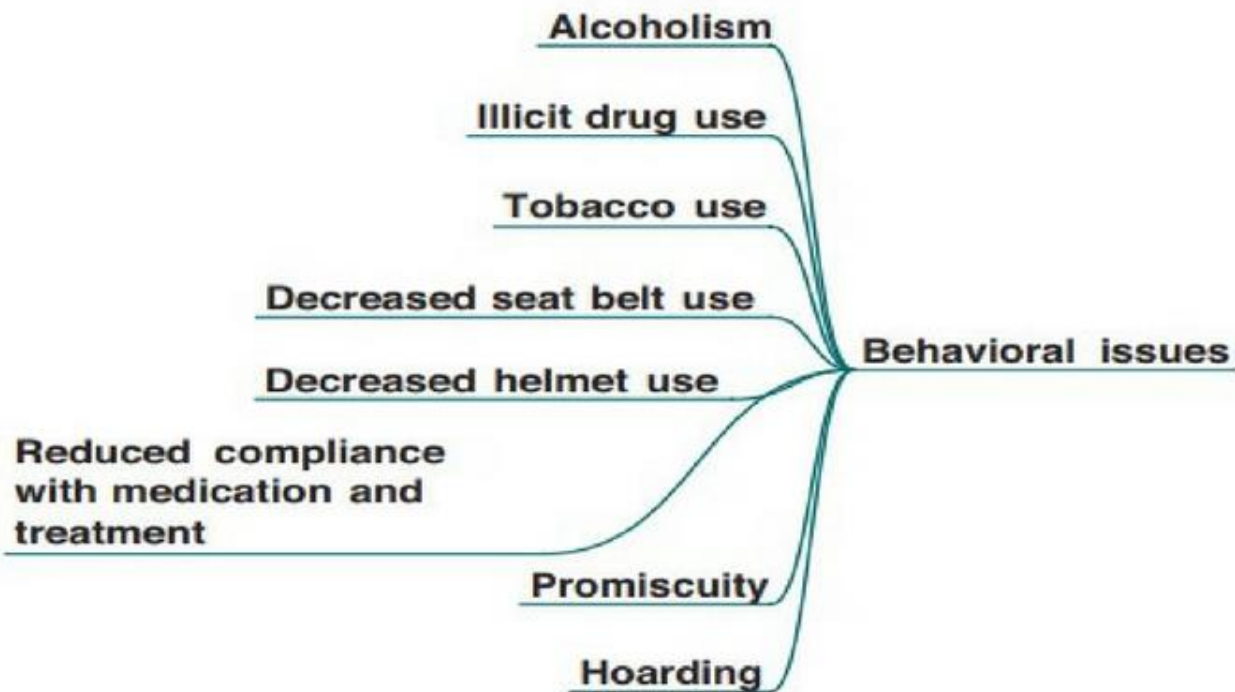
ADVANCING HEALTH EDUCATION & RESEARCH

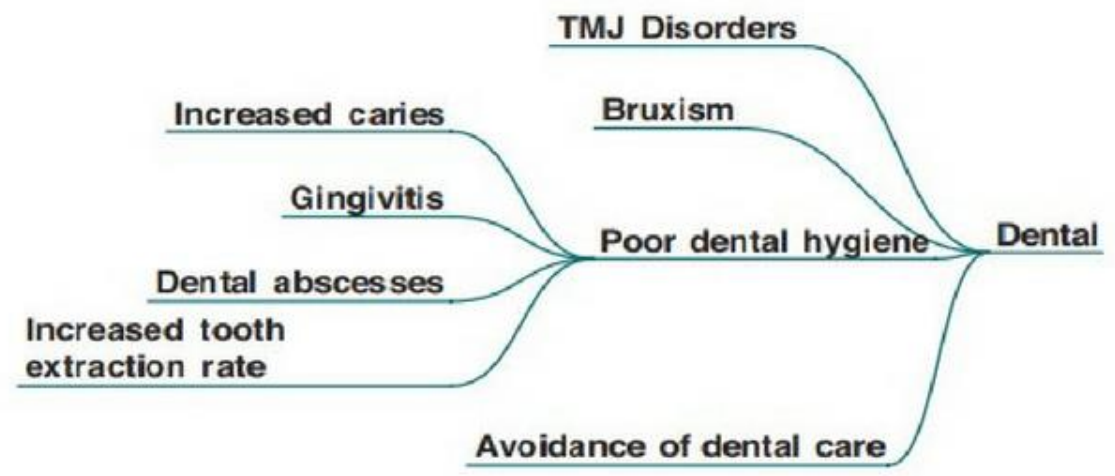
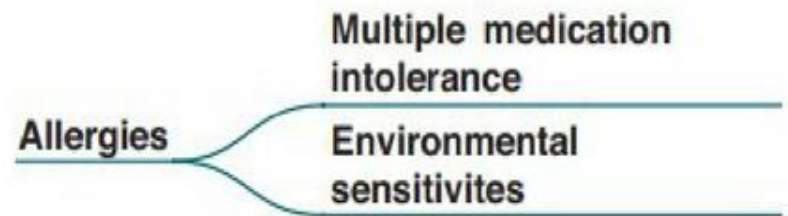
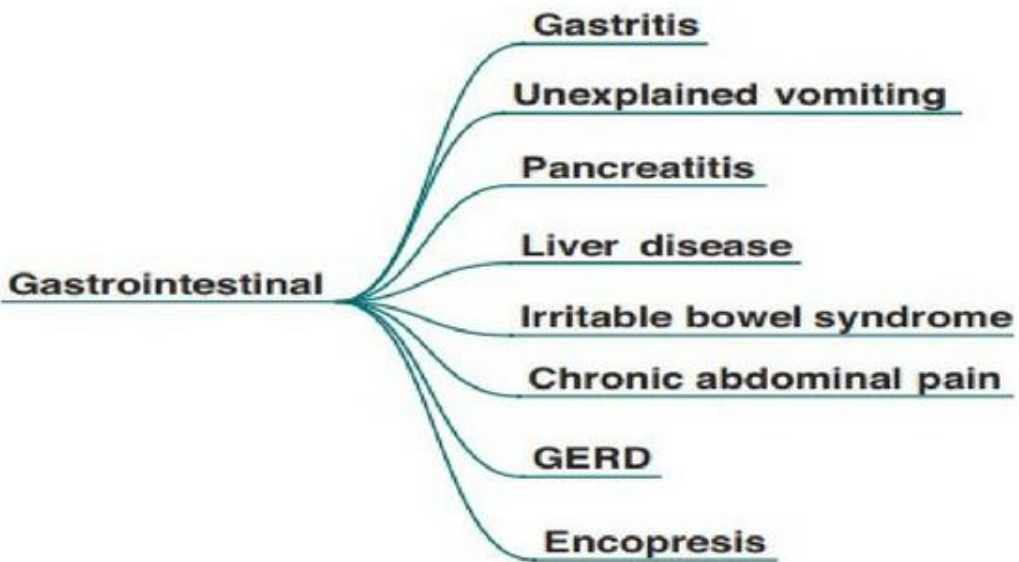
www.AVAHEALTH.org



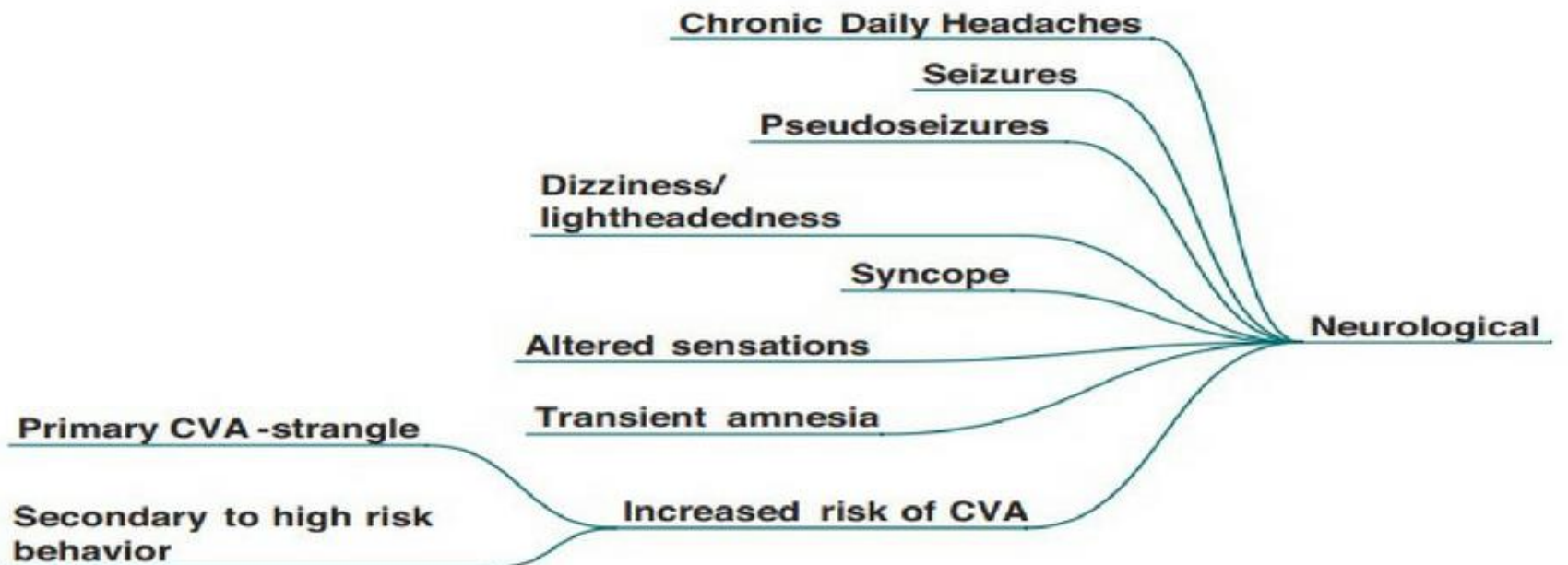
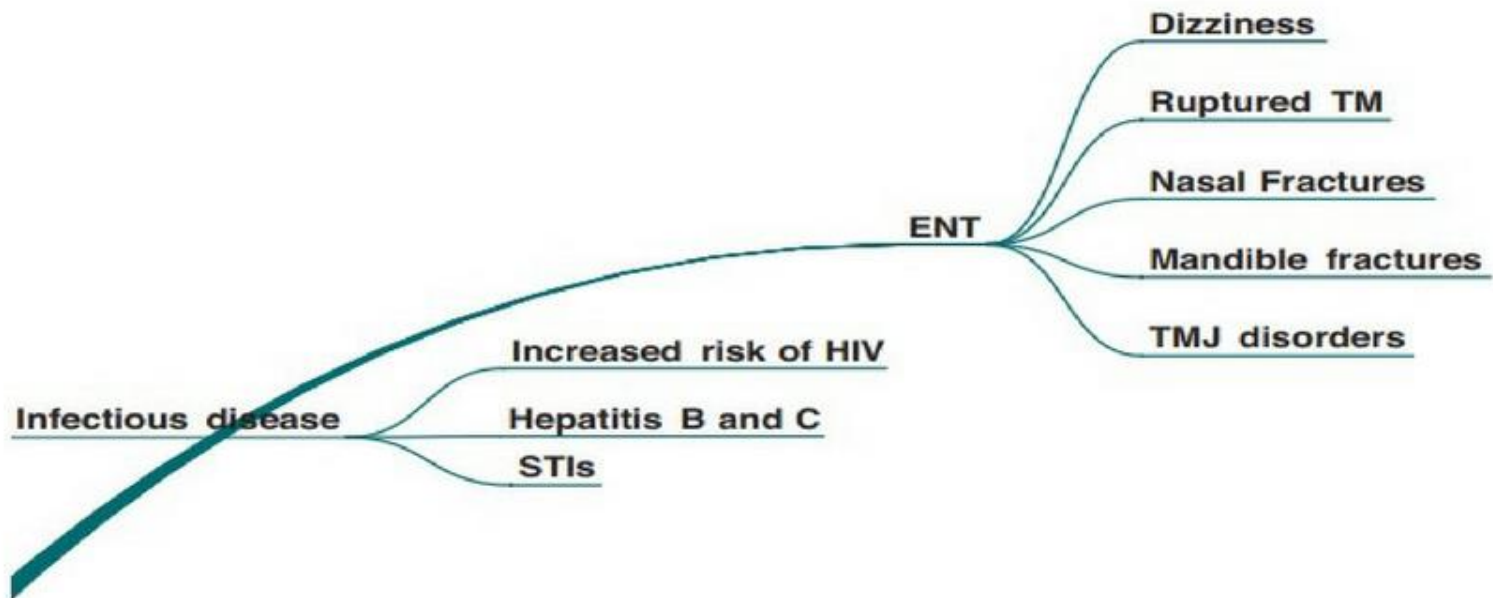


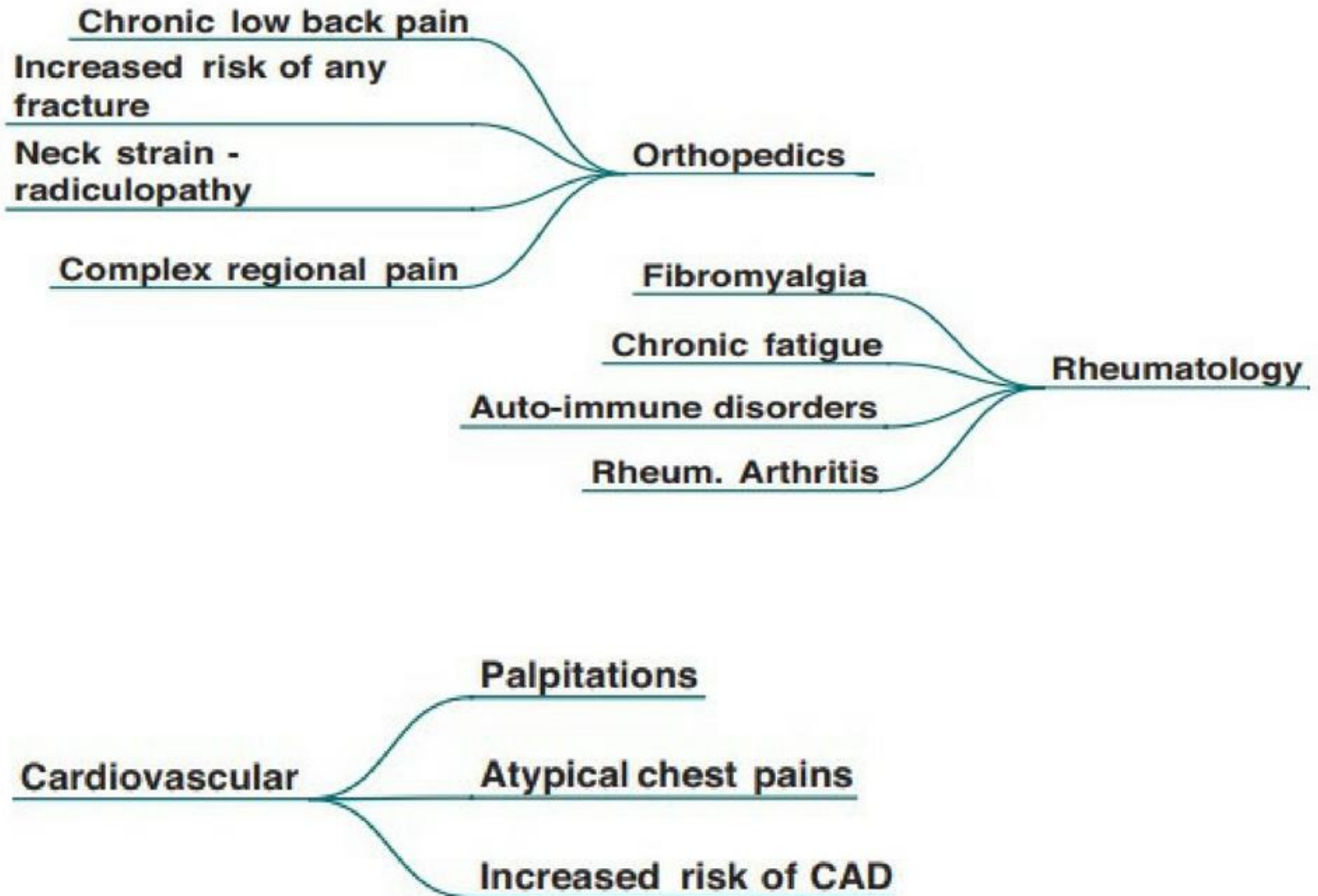


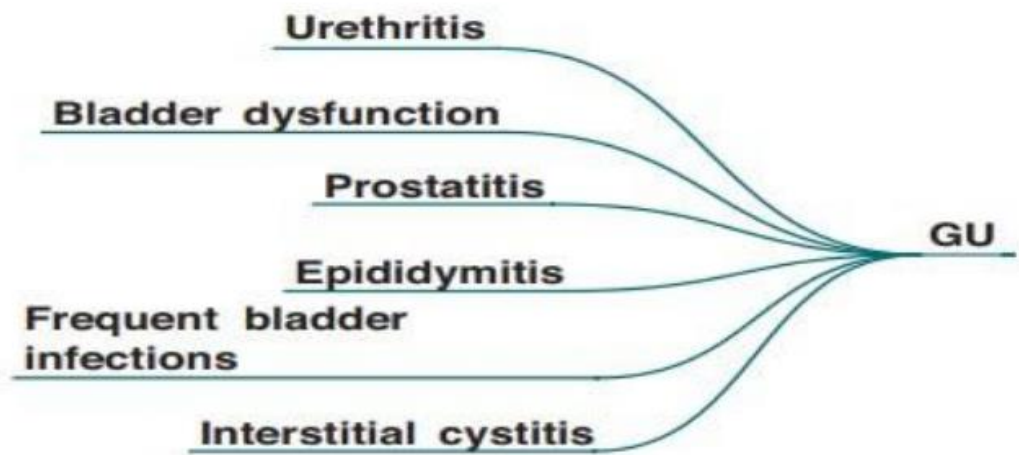
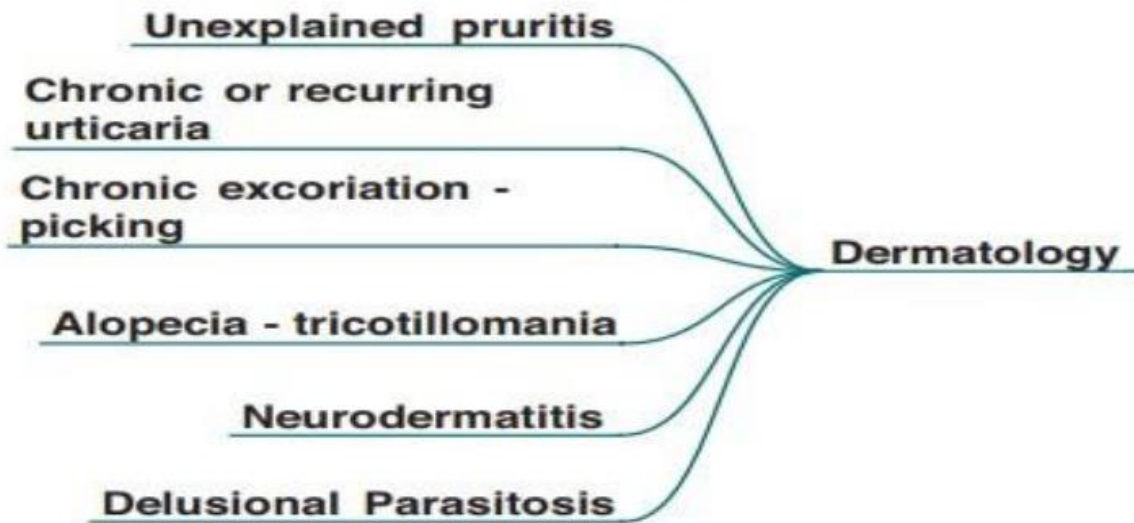


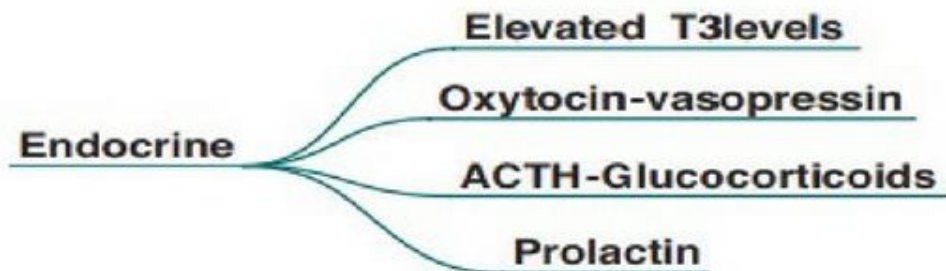
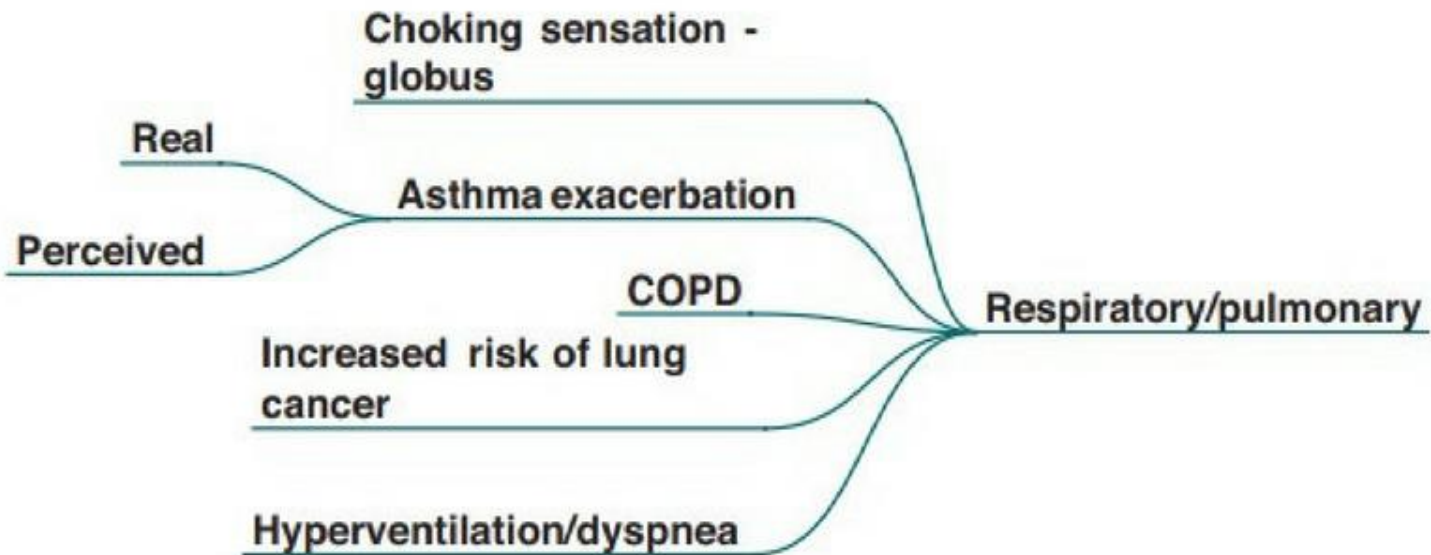












# RECOGNIZE INJURIES SUGGESTIVE OF DEFENSIVE POSTURE

## Ulnar Bruising of the Forearm

- Any part of the body can be used as a shield including inner aspects of arms and legs.





## Fingerprint Pressure

- May appear larger if the person pulled away while being grabbed.
- Be sure to check under arm medially which is often marked by perpetrator's thumb.





## Human Bite Mark

- Can present as very specific and contain saliva or teeth marks or they can present as a non-specific contusion or abrasion.



## Baseball Bat

- Linear blunt pattern; parallel lines separated by a clear area.



# STRANGULATION

- Strangulation is one of the most lethal forms of domestic violence: unconsciousness may occur within seconds and death within minutes.
- Death can occur days or even weeks later.
- Strangulation is a significant predictor for risk of future violence.
- Odd for homicide increase 750% for victims who have been previously strangled, compared to victims who have never been strangled.



Loss of consciousness can occur within 5 - 10 seconds. Death within minutes.<sup>2</sup>



are strangled manually (with hands).<sup>3</sup>



report losing consciousness.<sup>4</sup>



are strangled along with sexual assault/abuse.<sup>5</sup>  
9% are also pregnant.<sup>4</sup>



of strangled women believed they were going to die.<sup>6</sup>

And odds for homicide increase **750%**

for victims who have been previously strangled, compared to victims who have never been strangled.<sup>7</sup>

## HOWEVER...

Oftentimes, even in fatal cases, there are **NO EXTERNAL SIGNS** of injury.<sup>3</sup>



Only half of victims have visible injuries



Of these, only 15% could be photographed



# RECOGNIZING STRANGULATION INJURIES

Often subtle, can be lethal.

Attempted strangulation is a grave risk factor for lethality.

Look for:

- Redness around neck
- Rope or cord burn
- Fingernail scratches
- Neck swelling
- Petechia of neck, face, or sclera



# DOCUMENTATION

- Location and severity of injuries, both past and present.  
(Use body map)
- Take photos of woman's injuries.
- The woman's account of the incident.
- Details of previous violent contacts the abuser has had with the patient.
- Emotional and physical symptoms.
- Any additional non-physical indications of abuse, such as torn or damaged clothing.



# TAKING PHOTOGRAPHS

- Discuss the fact that photos will be important legal evidence even if she is not considering legal action.
- Obtain written consent to take photos.
- Use a scale such as a ruler or a coin to provide verification of the size of the injury.
- Write her name, date and time photo was taken, where it was taken, who took it and who else was present when it was taken on the back of each picture.

# COLLECTING FORENSIC EVIDENCE

If patient decides to take legal action, evidence related to the assault must be collected, labeled and handled so that it is useful to the patient's case.

The attending police officer should be consulted to the specific protocol to follow for such material.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
AND HEALTH CARE:  
BEST PRACTICES IN  
ACTION

# IMPORTANCE OF DV SCREENINGS

A 2003 study showed that 37% of battered women admitted abuse to their healthcare provider

- 70-81% of survivors of abuse reported that they wanted their healthcare provider to privately ask them about domestic abuse during their appointments



# R A D A R M N E M O N I C

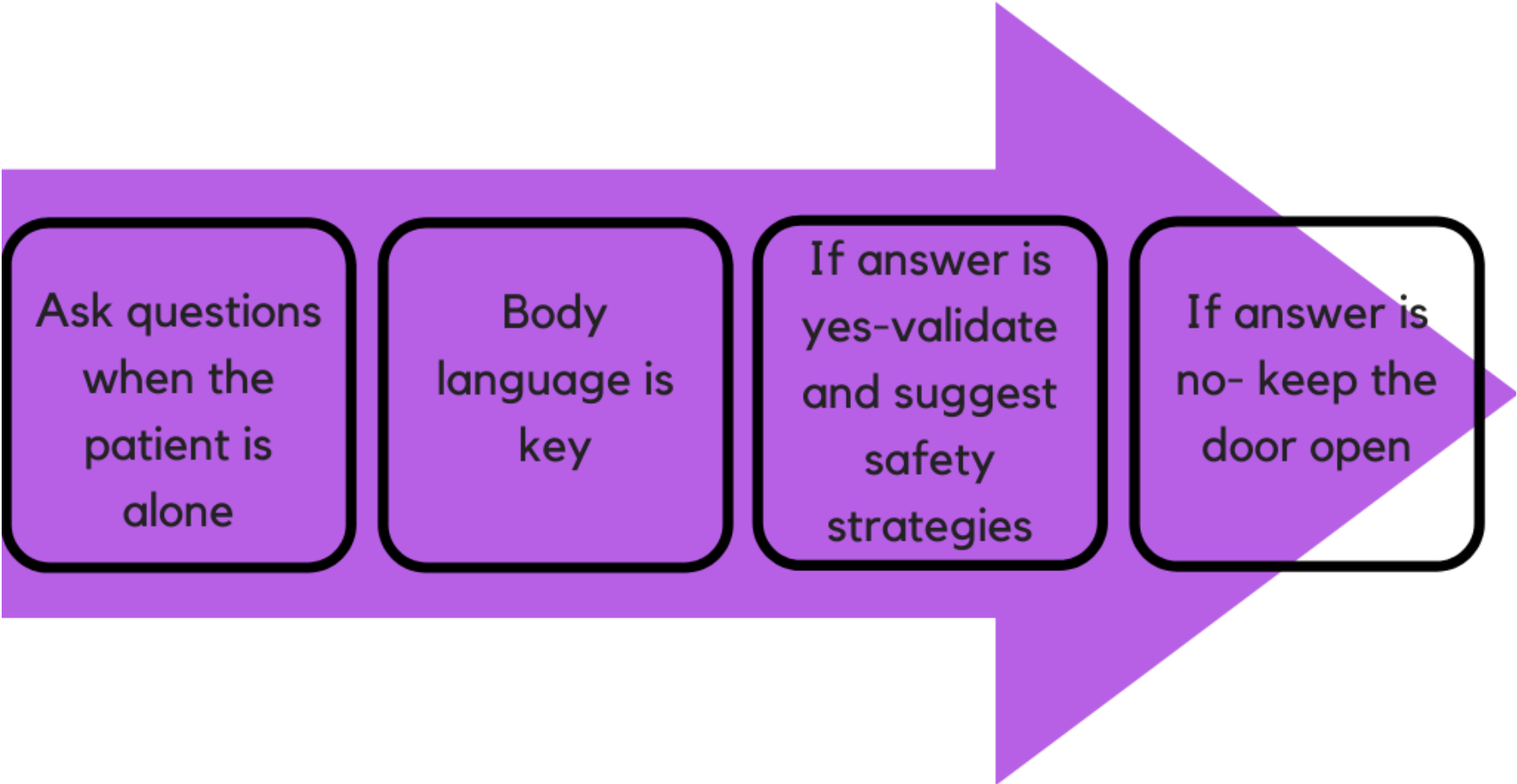
R – Routinely Ask All Patients

A – Ask Direct Questions

D – Document

A – Assess For Safety

R - Refer



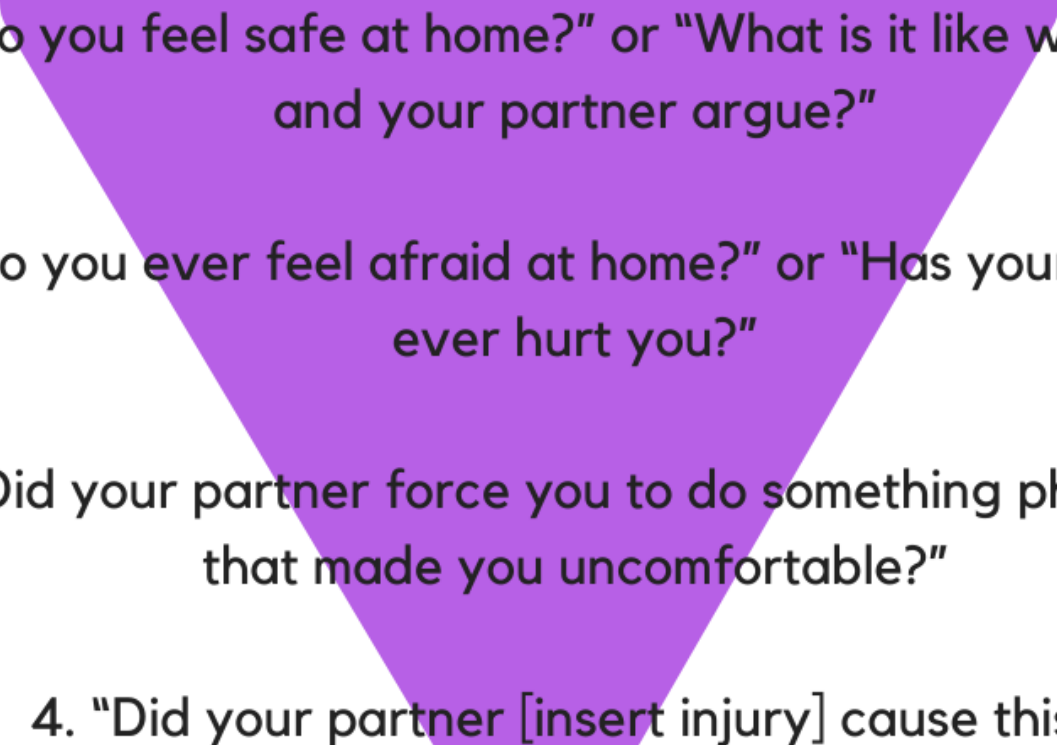
Ask questions  
when the  
patient is  
alone

Body  
language is  
key

If answer is  
yes-validate  
and suggest  
safety  
strategies

If answer is  
no- keep the  
door open

Think about asking questions like a funnel.  
The top part is the easiest, most open ended  
question—like:

- 
1. "Do you feel safe at home?" or "What is it like when you and your partner argue?"
  2. "Do you ever feel afraid at home?" or "Has your partner ever hurt you?"
  3. "Did your partner force you to do something physically that made you uncomfortable?"
  4. "Did your partner [insert injury] cause this?"

# RESPOND IF THEY DO NOT CHOOSE TO DISCLOSE

- Accept their response
- Express your concern
- Offer information
- Communicate willingness to help
- Document any information given or referrals



# RESPOND: WHAT IF THE PERSON DISCLOSES?

- Validate the person's experiences
- Provide support & referrals
- Provide statewide domestic violence hotline
- Document in the Medical Record



Hello

# MANDATORY REPORTING

Florida Statute 790.24

Any physician, nurse, or employee thereof and any employee of a hospital, sanitarium, clinic, or nursing home knowingly treating any person suffering from a gunshot wound or life-threatening injury indicating an act of violence, or receiving a request for such treatment, shall report the same immediately to the sheriff's department of the county in which said treatment is administered or request therefor received.

This section does not affect any requirement that a person has to report abuse pursuant to chapter 39 or chapter 415. Any such person willfully failing to report such treatment or request therefor is guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree.

Chapter 39 - Child Abuse Reporting Statute  
Chapter 415 - Adult Protective Services Reporting Statute

# MANDATORY REPORTING

Florida Statute 877.155

Any person who initially treats or is requested to treat a person with second-degree or third-degree burn injuries affecting 10 percent or more of the surface area of his or her body shall immediately report such treatment to the local sheriff's department if the treating person determines that the burns were caused by a flammable substance and if the treating person suspects the injury is a result of violence or unlawful activity.

S A F E T Y  
P L A N N I N G



# BARRIERS TO SEEKING AND FINDING SAFETY

- Fear that brutality and lethality of violence will increase
- Isolation
- Economic challenges
- Fear of law enforcement and judiciary response
- Children
- Trauma
- Limited access to support services
- Reasons of faith
- Love for the batterer
- Danger of the unknown





# TAKE AWAY MESSAGE

It is important as a medical professional to understand the dynamics of domestic violence and how to screen and support your patients because you often have multiple opportunities to see them where other won't.

HOWEVER, you are NOT expected to be a domestic violence expert; certified domestic violence centers are your resource. We also have victim/advocate privilege to protect a victim's communication with our staff.

**PALM BEACH COUNTY HOTLINES**

AVDA (800) 355-8547

YWCA HARMONY HOUSE (800) 973-YWCA

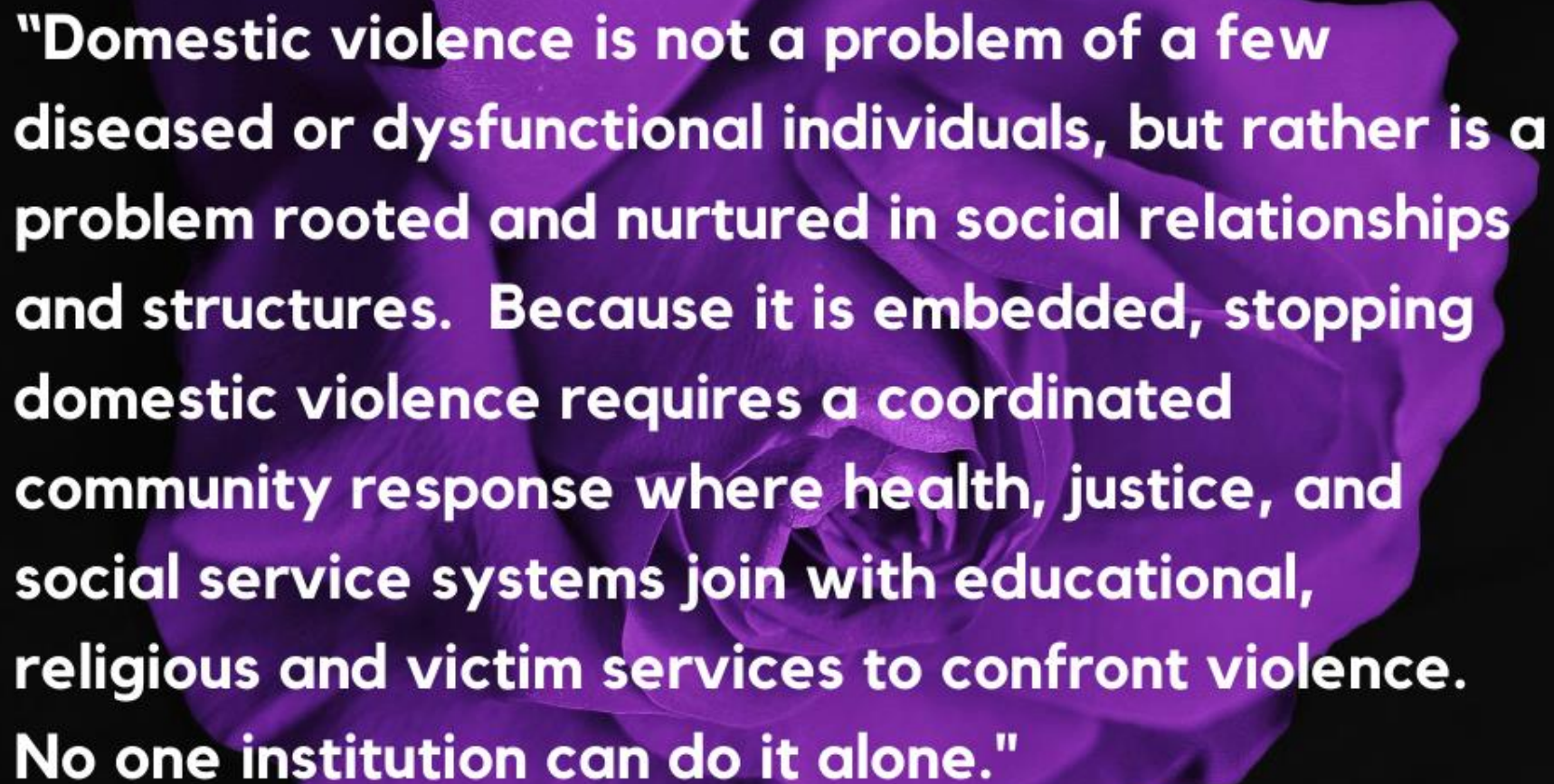
**FLORIDA STATEWIDE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE**

(800) 500-1119

**NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE**

(800) 799-SAFE

**CALL 911 IF YOU ARE IN IMMEDIATE DANGER**

A close-up photograph of a purple rose with white text overlaid. The rose is the central focus, with its petals showing intricate details and a gradient of purple colors. The background is dark, making the rose and the white text stand out prominently.

**"Domestic violence is not a problem of a few diseased or dysfunctional individuals, but rather is a problem rooted and nurtured in social relationships and structures. Because it is embedded, stopping domestic violence requires a coordinated community response where health, justice, and social service systems join with educational, religious and victim services to confront violence. No one institution can do it alone."**

**Anne Ganley, Ph.D.**