

Announcements, Information & Resources

Domestic Violence Risk Measurement Tool Now Online

Each year, more than three million women in the U.S. are abused by their intimate partners—and more than 1,200 are killed by their abusers. These victims of homicide or attempted homicide are often unaware that their lives are in danger prior to the attack. The newly revised Danger Assessment instrument, developed by Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing Associate Dean Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell, is available now online to help women at risk learn their level of danger and to train domestic violence advocates, law enforcement, and health care professionals in measuring and warning danger levels.

“According to informants who knew the victims,” says Dr. Campbell, “only 47 percent of femicide victims accurately predicted their risk before the lethal event and only 53 percent of attempted femicide victims accurately predicted their risk before the attempted murder.”

Twenty-five years ago, Dr. Campbell created the first Danger Assessment (DA) to help victims of abuse and the professionals who work with them to better understand the threats to their safety and well-being. This year, Dr. Campbell revised and updated the assessment to incorporate the findings of recent domestic violence research and to deliver the mechanism to a wider audience through a new website, <http://www.dangerassessment.org>. Women who feel they are in danger may visit the website and download the DA for free. The results are best interpreted, however, by a person certified to use the

DA scoring system. Criminal justice, health care and advocacy practitioners who wish to administer the assessment and interpret the scoring system also may use the website to obtain training and certification.

The assessment begins by giving a woman a calendar. She is asked to mark the days when physically abusive incidents occurred, ranking each incident's severity on a scale between one and five. This exercise can heighten the woman's awareness of her situation and reduce denial and minimization of the abuse. When the DA was originally developed, Dr. Campbell found that 38 percent of women who initially reported no increase in severity and frequency changed their response to “yes” after filling out the calendar.

The second part of the assessment asks the woman 20 questions designed to identify danger within the relationship. Each question addresses a specific behavior that is a significant predictor to intimate partner homicide. The list includes questions such as “Does he own a gun?” “Is he an alcoholic or problem drinker?” and “Does he threaten to harm your children?”

According to Dr. Campbell, “Women using the DA can gain a better understanding of their risk and decrease their chances of becoming femicide victims.”

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