Women Who Self-Harm More Likely to Report Being Abused

Recent research reported in the *Emergency Medicine Journal* indicates that women who deliberately self-harm are 75 times more likely to report experiencing physical and verbal abuse than women who do not self-harm.

Breast Implants Linked to Suicide

Women who undergo breast augmentation surgery may have a significantly higher rate of suicide, according to a study published in *Annals of Plastic Surgery* suggests. The research team, led by Eero Puukala, PhD, of the Finnish Cancer Registry, and Joseph K. McLaughlin, PhD, of the International Epidemiology Institute, identified 2,166 women undergoing cosmetic breast implant surgery at hospitals and clinics in Finland from 1970 to 2000. They then compared rates and causes of death for women with breast implants to those of women in the general population.

The overall risk of death and risk of death by cancer were no higher than expected for women with breast implants, and their risk of death from cardiovascular diseases was actually lower than that of the general population. However, women in the implant group showed a suicide rate three times higher than that of the general population, and particularly high rate during the first five years after the surgery. Six of 10 women in the implant group who committed suicide did so within five years after their operation.

Although this study, along with two other recent studies that found similar statistics, does not prove any causal relationship, the studies do raise concerns that underlying preoperative psychological problems may lead to an increased suicide rate. Some reports have also suggested increased rates of psychological disorders, including depression and low self-esteem, in this group of patients.

The findings, based on a 2-week study of patients in the emergency medicine department at Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge, UK, indicated that approximately 1 in 100 patients had been a victim of domestic abuse that required emergency medical treatment. To conduct the study, 270 people (of a possible 307) agreed to complete a questionnaire concerning whether actual or threatened violence had prompted them to seek emergency care. Data from 256 questionnaires were assessed.

Based on this survey, the authors calculated that among 55,000 patients seeking medical treatment, approximately 500 would be victims of abuse. Equal numbers of men and women said they had suffered from domestic abuse. The authors assert that domestic violence could lead to self-harm or that self-harm could be associated with certain personality traits that put an individual at increased risk of involvement in an abusive relationship.

The study suggests that either domestic abuse is becoming more common or that it has become less taboo and more people are likely to admit they are being abused. However, evidence still exists that many people hide their victimhood.

Prisons Damaging to Mental Health of Prisoners and Staff

A study in the *British Medical Journal* suggested that many aspects of prison life are damaging to the mental health of both prisoners and prison staff. A better understanding of the prison environment is needed if prisoners are to be successfully rehabilitated into society.

The research team set up focus groups for both prisoners and prison staff in a prison in southern England. The prisoner groups was attended by 31 prisoners, 18 men and 13 women, including sentenced and remanded prisoners and those at risk from harm from the general population. The prison staff meetings were attended by 15 men and 6 women.

The study found mental health concerns and stressors in both groups. Some of the key factors influencing prisoners' mental health were isolation, lack of mental stimulation, drug misuse, poor relations with prison staff, bullying, and lack