

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF DOCUMENTATION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN HEALTH RECORDS

From *Domestic Violence: Strategies For Screening, Assessment, Intervention, And Documentation.*”Trainer’s Manual For Health Care Providers, *Family Violence Prevention Fund (1998).*

History

Chief Complaint/History of Present Illness: Elicit and record precise details of the abuse and their relationship to the presenting problem. Include relevant trauma history and relationship of abuse to any concurrent medical symptoms.

Past Medical History/Review of Systems: Ask about and record any medical, trauma, obstetrical or gynecological, psychiatric, or substance abuse histories that are related to domestic violence. Document conditions which will affect the patient’s safety or ability to deal with the abuse.

Sexual History: Document any sexual assault, lack of barrier protection, STDs, unplanned pregnancy, abortions, miscarriages and ability to use birth control.

Medication History: Document any relationship between the abuse and the use of psychoactive, analgesic or other medication.

Relevant Social History: Document the relationship to abuser, living arrangement, abuser’s access to victim.

In recording the abuse, whenever possible, use patient’s own words, “Jimmy, my husband, hit me in the eye.”

Physical Examination

Record precise details of findings related to abuse, including a neurologic and mental status exam. Use body map and photographs to supplement written description. Use standard evidence collection techniques for acute injury or sexual assault.

Laboratory and Other Diagnostic Procedures

Record the results of any lab tests, ex-ray or diagnostic procedures and their relationship to the abuse.

Safety Assessment

Assess and record information pertaining to the patient’s risk for suicide or homicide, and potential for seriously being harmed or injured. Determine if it is physically/psychologically safe for her to go home. Are the children or other dependents safe? Assess her degree of entrapment and level of fear and record.

Record Options Discussed and Referral Offered

Police Report

Note whether one was filed, and record the name of investigating officer and action taken.

Record Arrangements for Follow-up/Discharge Information