

# **SEXUAL TRAUMA**

Joyce Heger, LCSW; LMHP

VA Nebraska Western Iowa Health  
Care System

# SEXUAL ASSAULT DEFINED

- Sexual Assault is intentional sexual contact, characterized by use of force, physical threat or abuse of authority or when the victim does not consent.
- Consent is not given when force, threat of force, or coercion is used; or when a victim is asleep, incapacitated, or unconscious.

# TYPES OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

- Rape
- Nonconsensual sodomy
- Indecent assault
- Attempts to commit these acts
- Carnal knowledge

Sexual assault victims experience trauma both physically and emotionally

# MYTHS

- Only Bad Girls Get Raped
- Everyone Enjoys a Little Rape Now and Then
- Men Rape for Sexual Release
- Rape is a Sign of Virility

# MYTHS, con't

- Date Rape Isn't Really Rape
- Only Attractive Women Get Raped
- If You Didn't Resist, You Must Have Wanted It
- Men Don't Get Raped

# MILITARY SEXUAL ASSAULT TRENDS

- Majority of victims are 20-24 year-old females in ranks PVT-SPC
- Most alleged perpetrators are 20-24 year-old males in ranks PVT-SPC
- Most assaults occur in Soldier living areas
- More than half involve alcohol abuse

# SEXUAL ABUSE

- Demeaning remarks about women
- Treating women as sex objects
- Being jealously angry
- Insisting on woman dressing in more sexual way than she wanted
- Minimizing importance of her feelings about sex
- Criticizing her sexually

# SEXUAL ABUSE, con't

- Insisting on unwanted touching
- Withholding sex and affection
- Calling her names like "whore" or "frigid"
- Publicly showing interest in other women
- Having affairs with other women after agreeing to monogamy
- Forcing sex, or unwanted sex acts

# VICTIM'S EMOTIONAL RESPONSES

- Significant variance, but may include:
- Anxiety, Guilt, Shame, Self-Blame
- Powerlessness
- Depression
- Distorted Self-Image
- Disorganization
- Withdrawal

# BOUNDARIES

- HAVING DIFFICULTY SAYING "NO"
- GIVING TOO MUCH
- GETTING INVOLVED TOO QUICKLY
- TRUSTING TOO EASILY
- INTRUDING ON OTHER'S BOUNDARIES
- STAYING IN RELATIONSHIPS TOO LONG

# BOUNDARIES, con't

- HAVING DIFFICULTY SAYING "YES"
- ISOLATING
- DISTRUSTING TOO EASILY
- FEELING LONELY
- STAYING IN RELATIONSHIPS TOO BRIEFLY

# SEXUAL HARASSMENT

- Sexual Harassment is a form of gender discrimination that involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:
  - A person's job, pay or career is placed at risk, or in jeopardy
  - It creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment

# MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA

- DoD definition does not include Sexual Harassment in definition of Sexual Assault
- VA definition of Military Sexual Trauma does include Sexual Harassment or Sexual Assault

# MILITARY RESOURCES

- UNIT VICTIM ADVOCATE (UVA)
- SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE COORDINATOR (SARC)
- SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION RESPONSE PROGRAM (SAPRO)

# UNIT VICTIM ADVOCATE (UVA)

- Active Duty Soldiers
- Trained to support victims of sexual assault mostly in deployed environments
- Provide crisis intervention, referral and non-clinical support to victims
- Report and coordinate with SARC
- Inform victims of reporting options
- Inform victims of service provider options (Medical, Legal, Chaplain)

# SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE COORDINATOR (SARC)

- Supervises UVA's
- Ensures reporting to Chain-of Command
- Ensure victims receive Support Services
- Ensure data collection, and evaluate program effectiveness

# REPORTING

- MILITARY RESTRICTED REPORT
- MILITARY UNRESTRICTED REPORT
- CIVILIAN REPORT

# PREVENTION

- Avoid alcohol and drugs
- Rely on instincts and be watchful
- Establish and maintain boundaries
- Remember A.S.A.P.
  - --Aware
  - --Safe
  - --Assertive
  - --Prepared

# RESOURCES, con't

- National Sexual Assault Hotline 1-800-865-(HOPE) 4673
- National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-(SAFE) 7233
- [www.RAINN.com](http://www.RAINN.com)
- Army's Sexual Assault and Prevention Program

# RESOURCES

- VA Medical Center MST Coordinator, Women Veteran's Program Manager, or OEF/OIF Points of Contact
- Vet Center (800-228-6838)
- Military OneSource (800-342-9647)  
[www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com)
- Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services [www.dhhs.ne.gov](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov)