

# **Margaret H. Rollins School of Nursing**

## **Nursing 202 – Advanced Concepts of Nursing**

### **Rape Trauma**

#### **RAPE TRAUMA**

- Rape is the most underreported crime in the U.S.
- Is defined as forcible penetration of the victim's body by the perpetrator (vaginal, oral or anal) without his or her consent. Any other form of forced sexual contact (from touch to mutilation) is considered sexual assault.
- Rape is an act of aggression, not passion. It is not sexually motivated. It involves a desire for power and control, and a wish to dominate and/or humiliate another person.
- Highest risk age group: 10-20 years old

#### **REACTIONS OF VICTIMS**

- Often the victim is overwhelmed by his/her feelings of powerlessness, loss of control, fear, shame, guilt, humiliation, and rage.
- Many frequently shower, even over and over as an attempt to regain control, return to normalcy, and get rid of all traces of the rape. Many relate they "feel unclean". Unfortunately, this destroys most of the evidence needed if they chose to prosecute.
- "Silent reaction" – many don't report the rape due to feelings of guilt, embarrassment, threats, and fear of not being believed.
- "Expressed response" – arrive in ED emotionally distraught, high anxiety, unable to respond to questions or follow simple directions.
- "Controlled response" – outward appearance of calm composure, but underneath there is acute distress. May be misinterpreted by those unfamiliar with rape victims.

#### **CARE OF THE VICTIM IN THE ED**

- All rape victims should seek medical care to be screened and treated for sexually transmitted diseases, regardless of whether or not they wish to report the rape.
- Immediately escort from triage to a private room to help the victim feel safe and non-threatened.
- Notify the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) and patient advocate.
- Assign a primary nurse to care for the victim until the SANE nurse arrives.
- Maintain neutral behavior – displays of shock, horror, disgust, or disbelief are not appropriate.
- Start with open-ended questions "What brings you here today?" If you say, "I understand you have been raped" or anything similar, you compromise the case against the perpetrator. Let the patient tell you why they came to the ED. Once they tell you, be sure to say to them "I'm glad you're here" "I'm glad you're alive"
- Avoid touching the patient unless he/she reaches out to you.
- Move slowly, explain everything.
- Rape victims have suffered a loss of control. Strive to continue to give them control over all events/exams that occur by giving them options and choices.
- Collection of evidence will be done by the SANE nurse.
- Provide emotional support throughout their time in the ED.
- Reinforce to the patient not to define themselves by that 10-minute period of their lives.

- Engage support systems for the victim – notify or inform family and friends with the victim's permission; initiate referrals for the patient. Provide written information as well as phone #'s.

### **RAPE TRAUMA SYNDROME**

#### **\* Is an approved NANDA Nursing Diagnosis**

- Injuries, even severe, heal in about 10 days. The emotional aspect of rape does not.
- Rape trauma syndrome is a variant of post-traumatic stress syndrome.
- Manifestations of rape trauma syndrome may include disorganization in the person's lifestyle, somatic complaints, cognitive, affective, and behavioral disruptions.
- Intrusive thoughts of the rape often break into the victim's conscious mind even during sleep.
- Increased motor activity, such as moving, taking trips, changing phone numbers, and making frequent visits to old friends are common.
- Often develop fears and phobias – fear of indoors if rape occurred indoors; fear of outdoors if rape occurred outdoors; fear of being alone; fear of crowds; fear of sexual encounters.
- Most do experience acute disruption of their sex life with their significant others.
- Almost all victims will experience psychological consequences for a period of time; one third of victims will continue to experience distress for 3 to 6 years after the rape. Prior psychological functioning including adequacy of coping mechanisms, resources, and social support are important factors in the victim's recovery.
- Counseling and adequate support systems (family, friends, professionals) are crucial.

### **PROTECT YOURSELF**

#### **TO AVOID A DATE RAPE**

- Decide on your personal sexual limits – know what you will or will not do.
- Communicate clearly – make sure your dates understand your sexual limits.
- Be assertive – stand up for your rights. It's your body, and only you can protect it.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs – fuzzy thinking is no protection.
- Date with friends – at least until you feel comfortable with a new date. Never leave a bar or party with someone you have just met. Don't let yourself be isolated.
- Stay in control – offer to share expenses so there is no question of "owing" your date. Carry extra money to get you home or make a phone call for help.
- Trust your intuition – if you feel that there is something wrong with a person or situation, get away immediately.

#### **TO AVOID STRANGER RAPE**

##### **AT HOME:**

- Use deadbolts; window locks; peepholes; timers for lights, radio, TV; outside security lights.
- Never open door to strangers; require ID of service or repair people.
- Plan several escape routes.
- Use only initials at door and in phone book. Pretend there is another person at home if someone calls.
- If you come home and something looks wrong or different – do not enter; go somewhere else and call police.

##### **ON THE JOB:**

- Do not work late alone; keep company with others.
- Go to the parking lot with others or ask security to accompany you.
- Vary route (and time if possible) to and from work.
- Maintain assertiveness with co-workers.

#### **IN YOUR CAR:**

- Always lock doors – when you are in the car and when you leave it, even if only for a short time.
- Park near lights at night.
- Have keys in hand when leaving building for car, or leaving car for building.
- Check interior of car before you get in.
- Drive with windows mostly closed
- Keep car in good working order, and keep gas tank at least ¼ full.
- In case of a breakdown, stay in locked car; if assistance is offered, request that police be called.

#### **ON THE STREET:**

- Go with others.
- Vary routines; go different ways at different times.
- Know where the safe places are: businesses that are open late, homes where people are up late, etc.
- If a situation feels wrong, get away as quickly as possible.
- Stay away from bushes and parked cars; walk in the center of the sidewalk or road.

#### **IF YOU ARE RAPED...**

##### **DO**

- Tell someone you trust.
- Call the police immediately.
- Go to the hospital or a doctor, even if you decide to not report it, to be screened and treated for venereal disease.

##### **DO NOT**

- Wash, shower, douche, urinate or defecate (if possible).
- Change your clothes or anything about the scene where the crime took place.
- Eat, drink or smoke.

You could destroy evidence which may be needed later.

**RAPE IS UNLAWFUL SEXUAL INTERCOURSE  
REPORT IT!**