

BAOS and BAOMS Joint Advice on Identification and Referral of Domestic Violence & Abuse in patients presenting with trauma during the COVID-19 pandemic.

P Coulthard – President of BAOS, P Magennis – Chair BAOMS 27 April 2020

This advice describes how to ask questions about DVA when patients present with dental and facial trauma and how to make a referral to a DVA Advocate.

Background

Household isolation measures to reduce coronavirus transmission during the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in increased risk of Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA).

The face is the most common target when DVA involves physical assault so dentists, dental care professionals, oral surgeons and oral and maxillofacial surgeons all have a significant part to play in identifying DVA.

Prepare

Those working in hospital are likely to have a Trust protocol/pathway for referral to a DVA Lead so familiarise yourself with this or speak to the safeguarding team. Others should identify local DVA Agencies and obtain contact details or those for national referral agencies.

National Domestic Abuse Helpline run by Refuge - 0808 2000 247

Men's Advice Line - 0808 801 0327

Galop for the LGBT+ community - 0800 999 5428

Karma Nirvana for honour-based abuse - 0800 5999 247

Ask

During a telephone/video triage consultation ask the patient to respond, 'yes' or 'no' to whether it is safe to talk when asking about the cause of the presenting injury.

During a face-to-face consultation find way to ask when any accompanying person is not present.

Be confident and supportive asking direct questions such as these with a non-judgmental tone of voice:

- Could you tell me how you got your injury?
- Was your injury caused by someone you know?
- Your partner seems very concerned and anxious about you. Sometimes people react like that when they feel guilty, were they responsible for your injuries?

Ask whether she or he is feeling safe or in danger at home. If the patient is in immediate danger then offer to call the emergency services using 999.

Ask if children are present at home as an immediate safeguarding referral should be made.

Refer

It is your role to refer. It is not your role to offer advice on how a patient should manage DVA

During a telephone/video triage or face-to-face consultation offer to telephone and arrange contact with a DVA Agency or pass the contact details for a DVA Agency.

Records

A written record of the telephone or face-to-face consultation should include a note of any disclosure or of any suspicion of DVA.