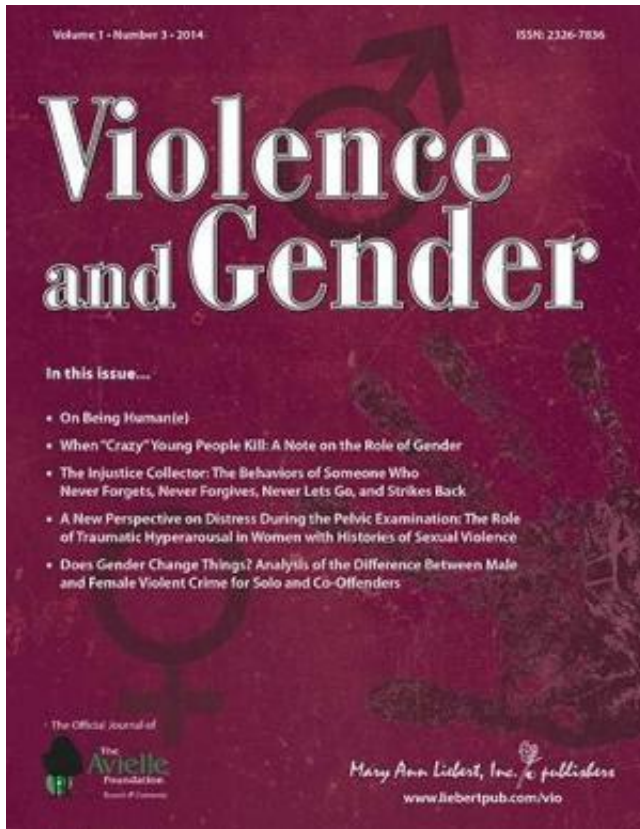


# Link between past sexual violence and distress on pelvic exam

2 October 2014



Credit: Mary Ann Liebert, Inc., publishers

Women who have a history of violent sexual abuse may suffer emotional distress during a routine pelvic examination. Healthcare providers would benefit from greater awareness of symptoms predictive of examination-related distress in this patient population, according to a study published in *Violence and Gender*.

In the article "[A New Perspective on Distress During the Pelvic Examination: The Role of Traumatic Hyperarousal in Women with Histories of Sexual Violence](#)", coauthors Christina Khan, MD, PhD, Carolyn Greene, PhD, Jennifer Strauss, PhD, David Spiegel, MD, and Julie Weitlauf, PhD, Stanford University School of Medicine, Veterans

Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System, and Stanford Cancer Institute (Palo Alto, CA), and Duke University School of Medicine (Durham, NC), identified physiologic symptoms of trauma (hyperarousal and hypervigilance) that were associated with distress among a group of female veterans with a history of sexual violence who underwent routine pelvic examination.

"This unique article provides us with a research-based perspective of the association between [sexual violence](#) and reactivity to the pelvic examination," says *Violence and Gender* Editor-in-Chief Mary Ellen O'Toole, PhD, Forensic Behavioral Consultant and Senior FBI Profiler/Criminal Investigative Analyst (ret.). "These early findings indicate that the physiologic symptoms of PTSD brought on by the assault may be associated with a greater likelihood of marked [distress](#) during the exam. This finding may be particularly meaningful to medical professionals to help them better understand the extent and long-term effects of sexual victimization, and the need for ongoing sensitivity for these patients."

**More information:** The article is available free on the *Violence and Gender* website at <http://online.liebertpub.com/doi/full/10.1089/vio.2014.0016> until November 2, 2014.

Provided by Mary Ann Liebert, Inc

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