



# CARIBBEAN CURRENTS

Volume 7, Number 2  
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## *Welcome..*

...to **CARIBBEAN CURRENTS**, Volume Seven, Number Two. This newsletter is edited by INFOTERRA/USA in its capacity as the Regional Service Centre (RSC) for INFOTERRA National Focal Points (NFPs) in the English and French-speaking Caribbean. Although the *CURRENTS* is assembled at INFOTERRA/USA, the content belongs to you, the readers. You are encouraged to send in any questions, comments, problems, or interesting issues relevant to the Region for inclusion in the *CURRENTS*. Please see the Guidelines for Contributions on page 6 for more information.

Each issue features a Directory of NFPs in the Region so that anyone with international environmental questions can contact their nearest resource. Please feel free to contact one another as well as your RSC for assistance or materials.

Please don't hesitate to share *CARIBBEAN CURRENTS* with your friends and colleagues, and to make copies as needed. The Currents should serve as an informational forum for anyone who lives, works, or is involved in environmental issues in the English and French-speaking Caribbean Region.

## **Women and Mental Health**

This issue's topic is women and mental health. Several studies have been done on the impacts of discrimination, domestic violence, sexual abuse and sexual harassment on the social and psychological well-being of women. According to the World Health Organization, "mental health is a complex phenomenon which is determined by multiple social, environmental, biological and psychological factors..." (WHO Fact Sheet N130).

If you have any comments on any topic, or would like to contribute a short article or have a resources guide to share, please submit your contribution following the guidelines on page 6, as we would like to include it in the next or a future issue of *CURRENTS*. Please feel free to fax, write to, or call the RSC with any questions or comments you have. Thank you for your assistance.

# **PRELIMINARY REFERENCES: WOMEN AND MENTAL HEALTH**

**compiled by April Wright, INFOTERRA/USA with assistance from  
Katie O'Neill, INFOTERRA/USA**

The body of literature on women's mental health issues addresses cause-effect relationships and possible gender-sensitive treatment solutions. The cause-effect relationship refers to the causes of social and psychological stress among women and the results of these stresses including depression, substance abuse and suicide. The purpose of the following annotated bibliography of articles aims to provide a starting point for researching these issues.

## **Domestic Violence**

Valdez, R. (Insto. Nacional Salud Publica, Av. Universidad No. 655, Cuernavaca Morelos, Mexico), "Impact of Domestic Violence in Women's Mental Health: Analysis and Perspectives in Mexico [Impacto de la Violencia Domestica en la Salud Mental de las Mujeres]," *Women and Health* 28 No. 1 (1998): 117-129.

This paper aims to present the current panorama of domestic violence as a public health problem. It considers, on one hand, the morbidity and mortality it produces at a national and international level, and, on the other hand, its impact on the quality of women's lives. The author emphasizes the association between domestic violence and women's mental health disorders expressed in the form of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, alcohol abuse, homicide and suicide. Because this relationship has hardly been explored in Mexico, information for mental health workers and researchers has been scarce. This paper reviews the results of international literature on this theme and suggests guidelines for research on it in Mexico. (Note: This article is in Spanish only).

Campbell, J.C., et. al., (Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing, Baltimore, MD USA), "Mental and Physical Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence on Women," *Psychiatric Clinics of North America* 20 No. 2 (June 1997): 353-374.

The battering of female partners and the concomitant emotional abuse that is almost always part of the coercive control have significant mental and physical health consequences for the women who experience this type of violence. This article highlights current knowledge regarding the mental and physical health effects of intimate partner violence on women and their children. It also discusses possible directions for screening, intervention, research and changes in the health care system.

## **Sexual Harassment/Discrimination**

Richman, J. A., et. al. (Dept. Of Psychiatry, University of Illinois at Chicago 60612, USA), "Sexual Harassment and Generalized Workplace Abuse Among University Employees: Prevalence and

Mental Health Correlates,” *American Journal of Public Health* 89 No. 3 (March 1999): 358-363.

This study hypothesized that interpersonal workplace stressors involving sexual harassment and generalized workplace abuse are highly prevalent and significantly linked with mental health outcomes, including symptomatic distress and alcohol and drug abuse. Interpersonally abusive workplace dynamics constitute a significant public health problem that merits increased intervention and prevention strategies.

Bagley, C., et. al., (Dept. Social Work Studies, University of Southampton, England), “Sexual Assault in School, Mental Health and Suicidal Behaviors in Adolescent Women in Canada,” *Adolescence* 32 No. 126 (Summer 1997): 361-366.

This study focused on adolescent women in grades 7-12 in a stratified random sample of Alberta high schools experiencing emotional problems and suicidal behavior due to sexual assault and harassment they endured in school. 23% of the girls had experienced at least one event of assault (sexual touching, sexual threats or remarks, or an incident of indecent exposure). 4% encountered such assaults on a regular basis. Those having a high number of harassments and assaults were more likely to have clinical profiles on the measures of emotional disorder. 15% of 38 women who experienced unwanted sexual touching attempted suicide in the previous six months.

Shrier, D.K., (Dept. Of Psychiatry, UMDNJ-New Jersey Medical School, Newark, New Jersey 07103 USA), “Sexual Harassment and Discrimination: Impact on Physical and Mental Health,” *New Jersey Medicine* 87 No. 2 (February 1990): 105-107.

Sexual harassment and sexual discrimination continue to be pervasive problems for women in business, academia, and medicine, with widespread and often serious health, emotional and economic consequences. It is important that health care providers become aware of the common physical and emotional symptoms associated with these victimization experiences and serve as supportive and informed resources to their patients.

## **Studies on Treatment**

Frank, J.B., et. al. (Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Science, George Washington University School of Medicine, 2150 Pennsylvania Ave., NW Washington, DC 20037 USA), “Women’s Mental Health in Primary Care: Depression, Anxiety, Somatization, Eating Disorders, and Substance Abuse,” *Medical Clinics of North America* 82 No. 2 (1998): 359-389.

Primary care physicians can improve the care of women patients by applying new concepts of physiology and psycho-social development. New development models that emphasize the importance of relationships in a woman’s self-concept and well-being have led to effective psychotherapies for depression, eating disorders, anxiety and substance abuse. Many of these therapies can be offered in brief formats suitable for primary care settings. New biological treatments including the use of estrogen, thyroid hormone and bright light for depression and refeeding to increase metabolic rate in eating disorders also promise to expand the range of mental health problems that general physicians can treat successfully.

Halbreich, U., (Biobehavior Program, State University of New York Clinical Center, 462 Grider St., Buffalo, NY 14215 USA), "Future Directions for Studies of Women's Mental Health," *Psychopharmacology Bulletin* 34 No. 3 (1998): 327-331.

Women's mental health is increasingly recognized as a major field with an impact on the well-being of individuals, their families and society. It is also recognized that this field is in its infancy and needs to be well delineated: definitions and assessments of procedures for the various topics need to be developed; the pathobiologies are as yet unknown; and time variations and treatment outcome of most of the entities included are unknown or not confirmed. Interactions among phenomena, biology, environment, and sociopsychological aspects have not been well studied. A group of investigators focused on various aspects of women's mental health...met and discussed the respective priorities in the field. This paper presents mechanisms and operational vehicles to effectively achieve the expressed goals and conduct the proposed studies.

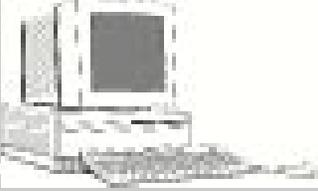
Andersen, M.D., et. al., (Well-Being Institute, Detroit, Michigan USA), "Nurses Decrease Barriers to Health Care by 'Hyperlinking' Multiple-Diagnosed Women Living with HIV/AIDS into Care," *Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care* 10 No. 2 (March-April 1999): 55-65.

The Well-Being Institute (WBI), a community-based nursing organization in Detroit, Michigan, has developed and put into practice innovative intervention and service delivery models to assist HIV-positive women who have a history of substance abuse and mental illness. These multiple-diagnosed women are known to have special problems and barriers to accessing health care. The service delivery model is based on "hyperlinking" women into hard-to-get health care appointment slots through nurses' personal contact in health care clinics. This article describes the service delivery and intervention models and discusses the outcomes of the WBI Women's Intervention Program in practice. The results of the model in practice demonstrate its success in hyperlinking hard-to-reach and hard-to-serve HIV-positive women with health care and other needed services and resources. These multiple-diagnosed women have also shown positive effects with an improved sense of well-being and decreased psychosocial distress.

*Please contact INFOTERRA/USA for information on obtaining any of these articles. You may reach us at:*

*Telephone: (202) 260-5917*

*E-mail: library-infoterra@epa.gov*



## **INTERNET SITES ON WOMEN & MENTAL HEALTH**

*A few of many sources of electronic information on women's mental health*

### **WOMEN'S HEALTH NEWSLETTERS**

**<http://www.mcphu.edu/institutes/iwh/profnews.html>**

This site provides links to newsletters and organizations focusing on women's health issues.

### **DEPRESSION & RELATED AFFECTED DISORDERS ASSOCIATION (DRADA)**

**<http://www.med.jhu.edu/drada/>**

This site provides links to association articles, including first hand accounts of people with depressive disorders and links to related organizations.

### **WHO PROGRAMME ON MENTAL HEALTH**

**<http://www.who.int/msa/>**

This site provides information on the World Health Organization's mental health programs and links to related sites.

### **WHO PUBLICATIONS ON WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH**

**<http://www.who.int/dsa/cat98/women8.htm>**

This site provides a list of WHO publications on women's health along with abstracts and ordering information.

### **SOCIETY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN'S HEALTH RESEARCH**

**<http://www.womens-health.org/>**

This site provides information on facts related to women's health.

### **NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF WOMEN**

**<http://www.now.org/>**

This site offers links to NOW press releases and articles. It also includes a link under "Key Issues" to Global Feminism.

### **INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON WOMEN**

**<http://www.icrw.org/>**

This site provides information on projects, studies, and publications done by the Center.

### **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S HEALTH COALITION**

**<http://www.iwhc.org/>**

This site provides information on critical issues in women's health and lists publications.

## Current Conferences Women & Mental Health



**April 29-30 1999** — *Health Issues and Concerns of Women of Color*, Washington, DC. To register, call (202) 865-4838

**June 12-15, 1999** — *Seventh Annual Congress on Women's Health*. Hilton Head, South Carolina, Contact Connie Tomber at: Telephone: (202) 223-8224; E-mail: [connie@womens-health.org](mailto:connie@womens-health.org).

**September 5-10, 1999** — *World Federation for Mental Health World Congress: Interfaces in Mental Health Poverty, Quality of Life & Society*, Santiago, Chile. Contact Dr. Benjamin Vicente, University of Concepcion, Casilla 60-C, Concepcion, Chile; Fax: 56 41 312 799; E-mail: [bvicent@udec.cl](mailto:bvicent@udec.cl).

### RELATED JOURNALS

**International Health Care for Women (ISSN 0739-9332)** - Interdisciplinary approach to women's health care and related topics.

**Journal of Women's Health (ISSN 1059-7115)** - Journal of the Society for the Advancement of Women's Health Research.

**WORLD (Women Organized to Respond to Life-Threatening Diseases) (no ISSN)** - Newsletter discussing social and medical issues women facing HIV encounter. Provides listing of upcoming conferences worldwide.

**Women & Health (ISSN 0363-0242)** Provides information relevant to health care providers and consumers..

### Guidelines for Contributions to *CARIBBEAN CURRENTS*

Any organization or individual operating or involved in the English and French-speaking Caribbean Region is welcome to contribute to the newsletter. Contributions should be addressed to:

Caribbean Currents Coordinator

INFOTERRA/USA

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Headquarters Library, 3404

401 M Street, S.W.

Washington, D.C. 20460

UNITED STATES

Telephone: (202) 260-5917; Fax: (202) 260-3923; E-mail: [library-infoterra@epamail.epa.gov](mailto:library-infoterra@epamail.epa.gov)

Please note that submissions should meet the following criteria:

- They are relevant to environmental issues
- They must be of interest to or directly involve the Region
- They must not endorse or recommend any product or commercial service, explicitly or implicitly
- They must be received by the posted deadline (see below)

Please feel free to contact the *CARIBBEAN CURRENTS* coordinator if you are interested in submitting an article. Please note that once your article is submitted, it is subject to editing as needed. Final decisions on editing and inclusion of any contributions are left to the INFOTERRA/USA Manager.

**DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO Vol. 7, No. 2: June 8, 1999**

# Welcome to The *CARIBBEAN CURRENTS* Bulletin Board

*Each issue, we will publish questions or concerns of interest to CURRENTS readers. Anyone who has materials or information that they are seeking or that they feel will be helpful should feel free to contribute. We will post queries and offerings of general interest on the Bulletin Board. You may respond by contacting the reader who has placed the item, or the RSC.*

## Bulletin Board

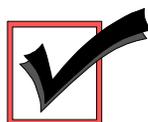


### Health Organizations

#### Pan American Health Organization

525 23rd St., NW  
Washington, DC 20037  
Telephone: (202) 974-3405  
Fax: (202) 974-3671  
E-mail: [hdw@paho.org](mailto:hdw@paho.org)  
Website: <http://www.paho.org/>

The Well-Being Institute  
216 South State St. Suite 4  
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104  
Telephone: (734) 913-4300  
Fax: (734) 913-4306  
E-mail: [info@pnc-wbi.com](mailto:info@pnc-wbi.com)  
Website: [http://  
secure2.branch.com/pncwbi/](http://secure2.branch.com/pncwbi/)



### Related Organizations

#### United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women

2 UN Plaza DC2-12th Floor  
New York, New York 10017  
Fax: (212) 963-3463  
E-mail: [daw@un.org](mailto:daw@un.org)  
Website: [http://www.un.org/  
womenwatch/daw](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw)

#### World Federation of Mental Health

Office of the Secretariat General  
The Sheppard & Enoch Pratt Hospital  
P.O. Box 6815  
Baltimore, Maryland 21285-6815  
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E-mail: [wfmh@erols.com](mailto:wfmh@erols.com)  
Website: <http://wfmh.com/>

Caribbean Currents is available on the Internet at <http://www.epa.gov/earlink1/currents/>

## About the NFP Directory

*This directory reflects changes and additions to the INFOTERRA Directory of National Focal Points distributed by INFOTERRA/PAC, dated November 1998. Please check this information to verify that it is correct and up-to-date. If you have any changes or corrections, please notify the RSC as soon as possible. We will be happy to relay the information to the PAC.*

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