

General body injury after sexual assault. A descriptive study from a Sexual assault center

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Introduction Patients experiencing sexual assault may seek help from a sexual assault center (SAC). The SAC provides i.a. forensic examination, including a general body examination with photo documentation of injuries and drawing on body diagrams.

The aim of the study was to describe the prevalence and severity of general body injury (GBI) among women attending the SAC in Trondheim, Norway. We wanted to explore GBI characteristics and possible associations between patient- and assault characteristics and GBI.

Material and methods We performed a retrospective, descriptive, cross-sectional study on women ≥ 12 years of age who attended the Trondheim SAC between 2012-2017. A total of 465 patients were included. Chi-square analyses were performed when comparing the severity of GBIs with patient and assault characteristics.

Results GBI was present in 265 patients (61%). A total of 168 (39%) had no injury, 206 (48%) had mild GBI, and 59 (14%) had moderate/severe GBI (MSGBI). The most prevalent location of GBI was on the extremities. Bruises (66%), abrasions (43%), and redness/swelling (40%) were the most common types of injury.

There was a higher prevalence of MSGBI when the patient was of non-Norwegian origin, had two or more vulnerability factors, when reporting more than one assailant, and when a public place of assault was reported. Similarly, when the assailant was an intimate partner, MSGBI occurred more often compared to any other patient-assailant relationship. There was a correspondingly higher prevalence of MSGBI when the patient reported moderate/severe violence during the assault.

There was no association between police reporting and GBI prevalence. There was a higher prevalence of the forensic medical report being requested from the police when the injuries

were classified as moderate/severe, but the forensic medical report was not collected in as many as 15 police-reported cases with MSGBI.

Conclusion: Patients assaulted by an intimate partner had a higher prevalence of MSGBI compared to other assailants. Even in cases where the SAC document MSGBI, the police is not always involved. And even in police-reported cases, the SAC documentation of MSGBI does not always seem to be interesting for the investigation.