

Exploring the Influence of Trauma-Informed Care on Pelvic Examinations for Women

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Abstract

Trauma-informed care (TIC) has become increasingly common in discussions regarding women's health. TIC refers to a clinical approach that implements compassion, respect, and acknowledges the impact of trauma on patients. In the United States, pelvic exams are routinely performed on women over 21 for gynecological abnormalities. Many of these women present with histories of post-traumatic stress disorder, sexual violence, intimate partner violence, and other psychological comorbidities. These histories greatly influence women's behaviors, including their likelihood to seek gynecological care in fear of being retraumatized. A literature search was conducted to determine the impact of TIC on the rates of women with histories of trauma who are receiving pelvic examinations. The literature search occurred on CINAHL, PubMed, and Nursing Reference Center databases using the following search terms: *trauma-informed care, women's health, and pelvic exams*. A total of 11 articles met the inclusion criteria. While the results regarding rates of pelvic exams were inconclusive, TIC leads to better long-term health outcomes and may lead to an increased sense of control for patients. The literature indicates a common theme of clinicians feeling there is a lack of training or information regarding TIC. Additional recommendations include further research on interventions that should be implemented, such as explanation of exams; allowing patients to be involved in their care, and collecting pertinent trauma history on patients. Trauma can have a major impact on all aspects of women's health and further studies are needed to determine best approaches to implementation.

Keywords: trauma-informed care, women's health, pelvic exams

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