Sleep-Related Pathways to Poor Health in Survivors of Intimate Partner Abuse

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Women who experience intimate partner abuse (IPA) are at risk for physical health consequences that transcend the level of assaultive injury. Likewise, sleep disturbance has also been established as a consequence of IPA. Though the connection between IPV and poor health is well-studied, the mechanism by which IPA survivors are at risk for poorer health is less understood. The present study considers sleep disturbance as a defining factor that contributes to poor physical health in survivors of IPA. Self-reported data from 189 ethnically diverse women with police-reported IPA incidents revealed that sleep disturbance mediates the relationship between IPA and physical health problems. Posttraumatic stress symptoms and depressive symptoms were considered in the analysis but were found to have no direct effect on health when considering sleep quality. These findings implicate treatment for sleep disturbance as a potential benefit to women who suffer health consequences following intimate partner abuse.

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