

8.2 Appendix B

Shame of battered husband

By LINDA CANN

MEN are being stabbed, punched and scalded with hot food and water by abusive partners, the first study of its kind in WA has confirmed.

Researchers at Edith Cowan University say domestic violence goes both ways — though female-on-male assaults are rarely acknowledged.

The extent of the problem is underestimated because many men are too ashamed to come forward, says lead researcher Alfred Allan.

"Shame is something we have come across quite regularly," Prof Allan said.

"Males won't easily admit abuse because it is seen to be not manly and they feel they wouldn't be believed."

The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates 33,200 WA men have experienced violence at the hands of a partner.

One participant in the Edith Cowan study told *The Sunday Times* how he escaped two years of physical and psychological abuse by his former wife.

The 45-year-old man said he could not retaliate against the drunken rages. "She would charge around the house and beat the daylights out of me night after night," he said.

"I would run out of the house and seek refuge in the car. The slightest thing would trigger her off. Once she saw a kitchen item out of place and went nuts, chasing me around the house and hitting me with any object, punching and kicking me.

"I never hit her back because I was brought up that it was wrong to hit a woman.

"My self-esteem was so bad. I thought everything was my fault and that I wasn't doing well enough."

As with many victims, he became increasingly depressed and isolated from family and friends, but stayed for the sake of their child.

He said there were few support services when he finally left, and the police dismissed his claims.

Prof Allan said the continuing study on partner violence against men had been an eyeopener.

"I was surprised by how similar the men's stories were to those reported by abused women," he said.

"As with battered women, the men came from all walks of life and generally appear to be ordinary fellows who were genuinely in love with their abusive partner.

"They often did not report the abuse. Physical violence might start with less severe behaviour like mocking, spitting, scratching, slapping and punching, but progress to using objects such as cooking utensils as weapons, throwing hot water or food at men, and using knives."

About 20 to 30 per cent of domestic violence was inflicted on men, Men's Advisory Network executive officer Gary Bryant said.

"It's a very controversial issue nobody wants to talk about," he said.

Department for Communities director-general Susan Barrera acknowledged men were victims of domestic violence, but research indicated women were more commonly victims and men the perpetrators.

Researchers expect to finish the study this year and want to speak to male domestic violence victims under 30, indigenous men or those from culturally diverse backgrounds. They are also seeking families and friends of male victims and female perpetrators.

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