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Address

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This is another example of a lecture I've included in the archive, because I would like the user and the public to understand how many things come under the purview of public health, the United States Public Health Service, and especially the Surgeon General.

This interdisciplinary training session had many general antecedents, but the specific one was the "Surgeon General Workshop on Violence and Public Health", referred to in the update I gave on Violence and Public Health before the Commissioned Officers Association on June 17, 1986

One of the recommendations that came through loud and clear – and often – from that Workshop was a plea for more training of health professionals so they might provide better services for the victims of violence as well as help reduce the level of interpersonal and domestic violence in our society.

Unfortunately, most folks in medicine and public health get very little exposure to the medical side of violence and victimization. The signs of abuse on children and adults are usually reviewed along with other information on physical trauma. But that misses the point. The abused child or the battered wife is being hurt precisely because he or she is a child or precisely because she is a wife.

The ultimate object of the abusers or the batterer is to try steal from the victim what is the essence of the victim's being: some small remaining kernel of humanity...of human dignity...and of personal integrity. It's a tough task, but it's easier than it used to be. First of all, violence now has our attention. At the following Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association the membership reviewed a position paper, which was designed to build support for the recommendations of the Surgeon General's Workshop on Violence and Public Health and was written by Dr. Rosemary Barber-Madden of Columbia University, who was an alumna of the Leesburg workshop.

Next, an increasing number of health professionals were responding, with a heightened interest, to this issue. In March of 1987 there was a "Second National Nursing Conference on Violence Against women", and we were to participate in the additional training and education sessions for physicians and allied health professionals.

Third, we are not alone, because we have new and strong allies among the justice community and among the social work profession.

I announced for the first time, “Law/Health Initiative on Domestic Violence” that we were putting together with the staff of the Assistant Attorney General Lois Herrington. We looked forward to the combined efforts and funding of some of the violence-related programs of the Justice Department with that of Public Health Service. Child sexual abuse was the first issue on the docket.

I reminded the audience again that these horrific things we discussed were not occurring in isolation: in a home where a child is beaten, the mother may be assaulted; where an infant is being abused, someone may also be terrorizing its grandparent; and where a daughter is sexually abused, her mother may be raped.