

Sample Opinion Editorial on Domestic Violence Related Homicide
SCREENING CAN PREVENT ABUSE
By [Name, Title, Organization]

[Victim] lost her life last week because her [husband/boyfriend/partner] [shot/stabbed/however he killed her] her. But her tragic death also results from our society's failure to do enough to stop domestic violence.

Domestic violence is a tremendous problem in [city/community] and across the country. [Add statistics about the prevalence of domestic violence and domestic homicide in your area]. Nearly one-third of American women (31 percent) report being physically or sexually abused by a husband or boyfriend at some point in their lives.

Sadly, [victim's] murder is not an isolated incident. In 2000, 1,247 American women—on average more than three women per day—were murdered by their husbands or boyfriends, according to the U.S. Department of Justice.

When a tragedy like this occurs, most people wonder how it could have happened. Some people blame police. Others blame the courts. Still others blame the victim herself. But the truth is, we all have neighbors, colleagues, friends or family members who face abuse. Up to 3.9 million American women are abused by their husbands or boyfriends each year.

We all have a role to play in stopping domestic violence and supporting its victims—we all have to be part of the solution. Health care providers in particular can play an important role in helping victims of abuse. Doctors and nurses are in a unique position to help battered women, many of whom see them for routine and emergency medical care. The U.S. Department of Justice has found that 37 percent of all women who sought care in hospital emergency rooms for violence-related injuries were injured by a current or former partner.

The health setting is often the safest place for battered women to seek help—if doctors and nurses know how to detect abuse, and provide referrals and support. That is why, at the [name of your clinic], we routinely screen patients for domestic violence. We ask the simple question: Is someone hurting you? And we let patients know that they can talk to us about domestic violence.

The screening we routinely conduct doesn't happen often enough. Too many health care providers screen their patients for heart disease and high blood pressure, but fail to ask them about domestic violence. In fact, fewer than ten percent of primary care physicians routinely screen patients for domestic violence during their regular office visits, according to a study published by the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in 1999. Those are opportunities lost to help battered women find the services and support that can save their lives.

[Clinic] is a member of the Family Violence Prevention Fund's California Clinic Collaborative on Domestic Violence. The Collaborative, funded by The California Endowment, explores ways that community-based health clinics can prevent domestic violence. The Collaborative is working with 20 community health clinics around California, including [your clinic], to implement comprehensive domestic violence strategies for the populations that clinics serve.

Health care providers at [clinic] play an important role in helping to end abuse in our community, and should serve as examples for health care providers in [city] and across the country. To successfully eliminate domestic violence, we need a coordinated response that involves the entire community, from health care providers to police officers to concerned citizens. No more women like [victim] should lose their lives, and no more children should lose their mothers because we fail to take domestic violence seriously enough.

[Name of op-ed author] is [one sentence description of his/her work and expertise on the subject.]