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# Healthcare Seeking Behaviors of Sexually Assaulted Women

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# Health Care Seeking Behaviors of Sexually Assaulted Women



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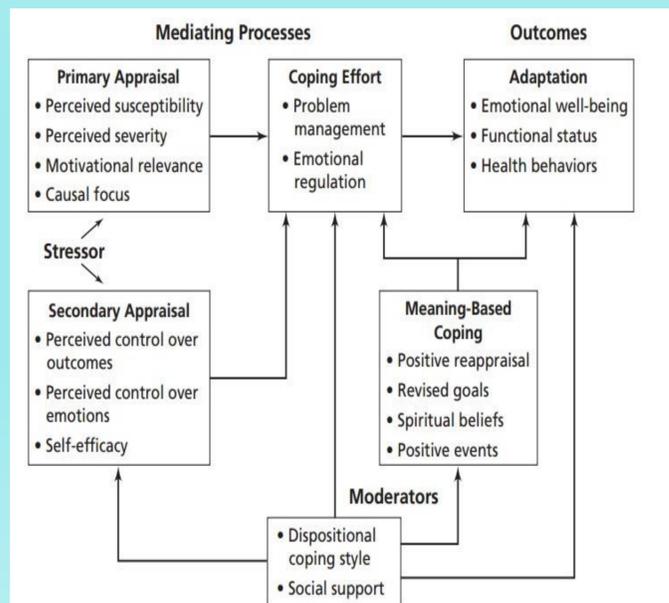
## Background and Significance

- Every 98 seconds someone is sexually assaulted
- 321,000 Americans over 12 years old and 60,000 children were sexually assaulted in 2016
- 94% of women experience acute stress disorder post assault
- 30% of women experience PTSD post assault
- Sexual assault survivors often go untreated
- Long term psychological and physical effects often manifest including panic attacks, trust issues, somatic body pain, and poor health

## Theoretical Framework

Stress Coping and Adaptation Model deals with how a person copes with a stressful situation. The two main factors are:

- 1) Person-environment relationship
- 2) Appraisals



## Research Questions and Purpose

Purpose: explore the long-term effect that sexual assault has on the health care seeking behavior of female survivors

Research Questions:

- 1) **What are the health seeking habits of female survivors of sexual assault?**
- 2) **What are interventions that nurses can use to better care for these patients?**

## Methods

- Integrative Review based on the Whittemore and Knafl framework using literature found through PsycInfo, Academic Search Complete (ACS), and Cumulative Index to Nursing and Health Literature (CINAHL).
- Separate searches were done for each research question with keywords used included: sexual assault, sexual abuse, survivor, healthcare seeking habits, trauma-informed care, implications, and interventions
- Articles selected with the timeframe of January 2006-December 2016.

## Results

### Health Care Behaviors

Common themes among survivors:

- Women who don't disclose to their HCP state that self perception, fear and fear that HCP would be unhelpful
- Majority of survivors express fear of medical procedures
- Many women avoid seeking out care due to fears
- Sexual assault survivors express more dissatisfaction with services than non assaulted woman

### Interventions

Important interventions include:

- Provided trauma informed care
- Appropriate responses to disclosure
- Training programs
- Ensuring sensitive care for all
- Guidelines to provide care
- Soundproofing
- Ensuring privacy
- "Inform before perform" care
- Explanations of actions
- Warming equipment before use

## Discussion

- Sexual assault is a crime that does not end with the initial trauma. There is a relationship between sexual assault and future health care seeking behaviors. Habits are affected during the immediate aftermath and during future encounters with HCPs.
- Interventions by HCPs can be implemented to ensure better care of sexual assault survivors and provide and safe, comforting, and beneficial experience.

## Nursing Implications

- Nurses often care for patients that sexual assault survivors both during the initial assault and in future health care experiences.
- SANEs exist to employ compassionate care and decrease instances of re-traumatization however all HCP do not receive the same training
- Interventions and guidelines need to be created and enforced to provide sensitive delivery of care and it is important for nurses to provide evidence based care to sexual assault survivors

## Limitations

- This research focused solely on female sexual assault survivors and excluded literature concentrating on males.
- Studies included were published only within the past 10 years