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CASE REPORT

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## Severe multiple injuries caused by gender based violence: a case report

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## Abstract

### Introduction:

Gender-based violence (GBV) against women has been identified as a global health and development issue. We report a case of GBV causing severe, multiple injuries in a middle-aged female.

**Case report:** A 40-year-old female presented to the emergency room following an argument with her husband. She had a disturbed level of consciousness, shortness of breath, and multiple patches of skin discoloration. On examination, the patient was semi-conscious, had multiple ecchymosis, and bilaterally decreased air entry. Computed tomography showed multiple fractures. The patient was intubated and admitted to the ICU. The patient was discharged after 23 days of admission.

**Conclusion:** GBV is still a cause of severe trauma that puts the patient's life at risk.

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## Introduction

GBV against women has been identified as a global health and development issue, and a host of policies and public education programs have been undertaken around the world that aim at reducing such GBV [1]. It has been identified as a global public health and human rights priority that leads to high rates of morbidity and mortality [2]. GBV is generally understood to include physical, sexual, and psychological abuse from intimate partners, sexual violence by non-partners, sexual abuse of girls, and acts such as trafficking of women for sex [3]. Apart from physical injury, GBV increases long-term risk of other conditions, including physical disability, chronic pain, depression, and drug and alcohol abuse [4]. There are many fatal and non-fatal conditions which may occur post violence in women, for example: suicide, homicide, functional impairment, maternal mortality, physical symptoms, chronic pain syndromes, permanent disability, gastrointestinal disorders, fibromyalgia, somatic complaints, post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, eating disorders, panic disorder, low self-esteem, sexual dysfunction, substance abuse, smoking, sexual risk-taking, unsafe abortion, and unwanted pregnancy [4]. We report a case of GBV causing severe morbidity and multiple serious bone fractures with a three-week intensive care unit (ICU) admission.

## Case report

A 40-year-old female, mother of 4 children, presented to the emergency room at 2:00AM with chest pain, full consciousness, no shortness of breath, and no skin discoloration. On examination, the patient was semi-conscious, Glasgow Comma Score was 15, multiple ecchymoses were found all over body (Figure 1), and no shortness of breath. Oxygen saturation was 82% with mask oxygen. Bilateral thoracostomy drains were inserted. Chest x-ray was inconclusive. Computed tomography scan of the chest and neck showed eight rib fractures on the left side, six rib fractures on the right side, sternal dislocation, manubriosternal fracture (Figure 2), left side hemothorax (Figure 3), fracture of body of dorsal vertebrae ten and 12 (Figure 4), and fracture of the spine of cervical 3 and 5 (Figure 5). After imaging, the patient was referred to the ICU and intubated as the oxygen saturation decreased. Percutaneous jejunostomy applied for feeding. Tracheostomy was created eight days after endotracheal intubation. The patient remained intubated in ICU for 18 days. Four days later the patient was discharged from ICU and she was admitted in the ward for one week and discharged home with good health 23 days after admission.

## Discussion

Violence against the female gender is a widespread human rights violation all over the world [5]. Our case remained in hospital for 23 days with a 16 day ICU admission under invasive continuous monitoring. It erodes women's self-esteem, drains their energy, and compromises their physical and psychological health. GBV is less likely to injure males than females [5]. In this battle, the male was free from injury. Nevertheless, perhaps females need to recognize that although male and female aggression is not the same, in both cases the aggression is regarded as a criminal act [6].

Severe and multiple traumas which were found in our case confirm that the female was not able to defend herself. It is reported that bidirectional violence results in more severe injury in intimate partner violence, especially for the female [7].

According to the literature, there is an association between being a rural resident and victimization of girls with GBV. Other reports showed that there is an association between adolescent dating violence and alcohol and drug abuse, as well as higher numbers of sexual partners and being a gang member [8]. Our patient was from rural area and her husband was a drinker with a single sexual partner.

According to some reports, the positive association is the highest among unmarried females. From this, we can conclude that national data that focuses mainly on married female cannot give the full picture of the prevalence of intimate partner violence in females' lives [9].

### Conclusion

Gender-based violence is an ongoing cause of severe trauma that puts the patients' lives at risk. It can cause profound health problems that may need ICU admission.

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