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Exploring the Influence of Trauma-Informed Care on Pelvic Examinations for Women

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Exploring the Influence of Trauma-Informed Care on Pelvic Examinations for Women

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Introduction

- Trauma-informed care (TIC) is a new care model and needs evaluation of effectiveness.
- TIC is performed by adequate screening, validation of feelings, and non-judgemental questions during examination.
- Trauma can result in decreased obstetrical and gynecological (OB/GYN) and overall health, social functioning, and engagement in healthcare.
- Need for increased provider education on implementing TIC.

Figure 1

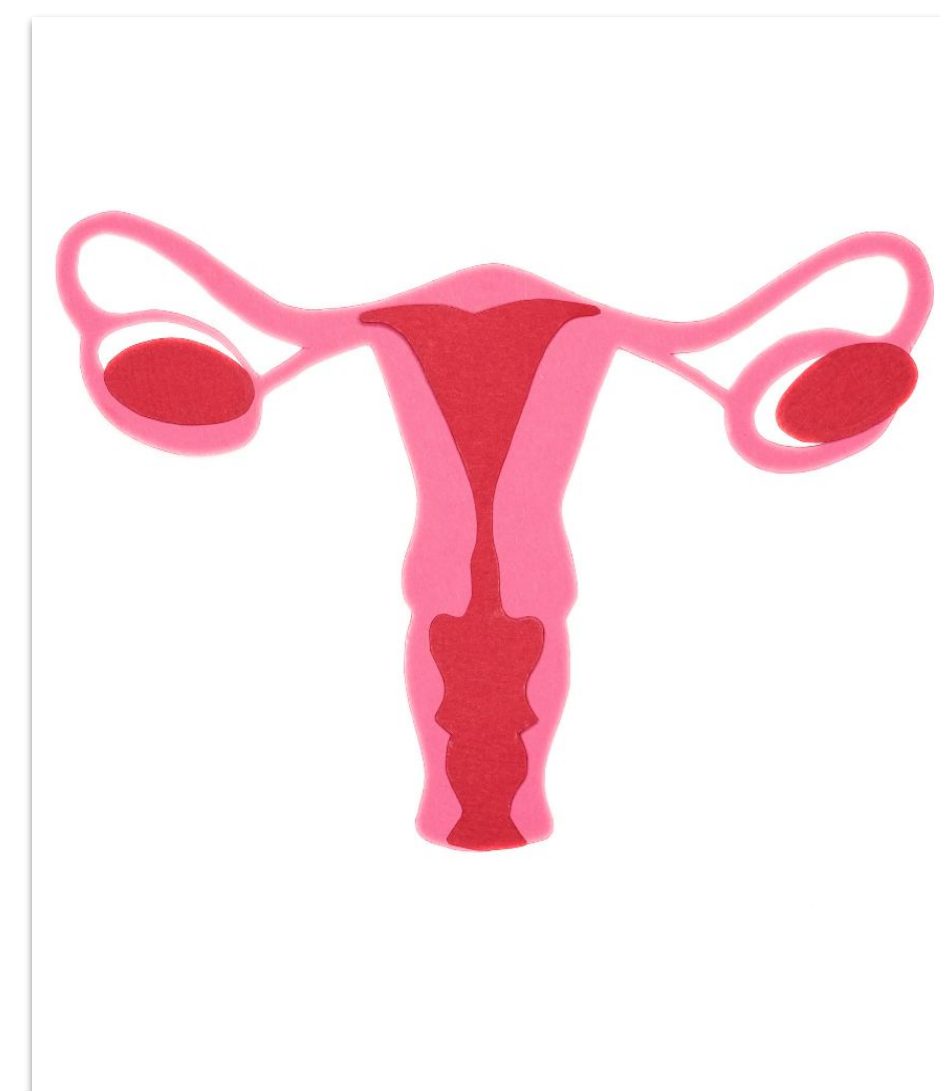
A Gynecological Examination Chair



Note: This image demonstrates a commonly used examination chair in an OBGYN office.

Figure 2

The female Reproductive System



Note: The female reproductive organs assessed during pelvic examinations.

PICO Question

- (P) = Women aged 21-65 years-old with a trauma history seeking OBGYN pelvic exams
(I) = Implementation of trauma-informed practices
(C) = No implementation of trauma-informed practices
(O) = Increase rates of seeking OBGYN care

Methods

Databases Used:

- CINAHL
- PubMed
- Nursing Reference Center

Inclusion Criteria:

- Trauma-informed care
- Women's health
- Pelvic exams

A total of **11 articles** met the inclusion criteria to be reviewed.

References

1. Adams-Hillard, P. J. (2019). Why and how to perform trauma-informed care. *Contemporary OB/GYN*, 64(8), 15-17.
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3. Nagle-Yang, S., Sachdeva, J., Zhao, L. X., Shenoi, N., Shirvani, N., Worley, L. L. M., Gopalan, P., Albertini, E. S., Spada, M., Mittal, L., Moore Simas, T. A., & Byatt, N. (2022). Trauma-informed care for obstetric and gynecologic settings. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, 26(12), 2362-2369. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-022-03518-y>
4. Güneş, G., & Karaçam, Z. (2017). The feeling of discomfort during vaginal examination, history of abuse and sexual abuse and post-traumatic stress disorder in women. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 26(15-16), 2362-2371. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.13574>

Outcomes

How Trauma Affects Health

- Trauma triggers feelings of shame, guilt, rage, isolation, and disconnection leading to decreased social functioning, changes in health perception, and decreased quality of life.
- Symptoms of trauma explain why survivors have high rates of acute and emergency care utilization, but low rates of preventive care utilization
- Individuals who have experienced trauma may have anxiety about medical examinations, procedures or about being in medical settings altogether

Advantages to TIC

- Attempts to prevent "retraumatization"
- Leads to positive long-term health outcomes
- Helps the patient feel empowered/take charge of their care
- Encourages patient to seek future care
- Women with previous negative experiences during pelvic exams were less likely to seek future examinations.

Barriers to TIC

- Numerous clinicians expressed not enough training or information on TIC.
- Only a small portion of graduate level doctoral courses offer education on trauma-related courses.
- Individuals who have experiences trauma may not feel comfortable sharing their experiences

Discussion

It may be worthwhile to implement a TIC care framework regardless of the patient's verbal account of their history. Making TIC standard practice may decrease rates of obstetric violence, and prevent potential retraumatization.

Suggestions for Future Research:

- Specific interventions such as
- Allowing the patient to use instruments on themselves if appropriate
- Obtaining a history of any trauma
- Establishing positive rapport with the patient
- SAFE Nurse program (Nurses trained in sexual assault forensic examination)
- In depth explanation of procedures, allowing questions

Figure 3

A Nurse and Patient



Note: Therapeutic communication between nurse and patient is part of the interview process and review of past medical history.

Figure 4

A Speculum



Note: Gynecologist in blue medical gloves holding vaginal speculum in his hands to examine a patient sitting on a gynecological chair.