

## **Intimate Partner Violence against Pregnant Women**

Violence against women by their intimate partners is a public health and social problem, and it may cause physical injury leading to negative impact on their health. If intimate partner violence (IPV) occurs during pregnancy, not only would it put the women's health and safety at risk, it could also affect the well-being of their babies. It is, therefore, crucial to identify those high risk pregnant women who are suffering from intimate partner violence and to introduce appropriate preventive measures and intervention.

The Department of Nursing Studies, Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology and Department of Social Work and Social Administration at The University of Hong Kong had conducted a survey on intimate partner violence of pregnant women. 277 (9.3%), out of 2,975 pregnant women, reported being abused by their intimate partners, in which 245 (8.2%) were abused emotionally and 76 (2.6%) were abused physically or sexually. Those women with unintended pregnancy, require social support, in debt, are unemployed; with health problems; or have conflicts with their in-laws were more likely to be physically abused.

To prevent intimate partner violence (IPV), primary preventive measures can be introduced, including universal screening for IPV during pregnancy; home visitations by midwives or social workers during and after pregnancy for women at risk; provision of psycho-social support programmes to pregnant women and their partners; training in IPV screening and intervention for medical practitioners; and community education on family harmony and partner violence awareness.

In addition, secondary preventive measures should focus on early detection and intervention, including risk assessment of pregnant women with a history of intimate partner violence; and providing empowerment intervention to pregnant women in order to reduce the severity and frequency of abuse and the negative impact of IPV.