

# **Emotional, physical, and sexual abuse and abuse in health care: Prevalence and current suffering in samples of Swedish female and male patients**

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**Background** Abusive experiences have been studied among women for about 30 years. Still the range of prevalence estimated in different studies is often very wide. Prevalence rates therefore need to be associated with clear definitions. There is a shortage of instruments that have been validated in the study population where they are used. We do not know of any such instrument that has been used in male as well as female samples.

**Methods** The NorVold Abuse Questionnaire (NorAQ) was developed to measure prevalence of four kinds of abuse, emotional (EA), physical (PA), and sexual abuse (SA), and abuse in health care (AHC). Questions about abuse have been validated in female and male sub samples with good results. In this study 1694 men attending seven clinics and 842 patients visiting a gynecological clinic at a university hospital in Sweden, answered NorAQ

**Findings** EA, SA and AHC were less frequently reported while PA was more commonly reported in the male sample than in the female sample. The sex ratio for EA based on NorAQ in Swedish male and female clinical samples were 1:2, SA 1:5 and AHC 1:3. Adding suffering from abuse increases existing sex differences in particular for SA (1:12), but also for AHC (1:4), and adds a difference in PA (1:3) while EA stays the same.

**Interpretation** EA, SX and AHC were less frequently reported in the male sample than in the female sample. Higher prevalence of PA was estimated in the male than the female samples.