

Sexual violence against women:
the need for a multidisciplinary integrated care model

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According to Ades and co-workers [1], clinical practice with women who experienced sexual violence requires multidisciplinary trauma-informed care addressing patients' medical and psychological needs, either short- or long-term. Following these key points, our Sexual and Domestic Violence Service (SVSeD, Fondazione IRCCS Ca' Granda Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico, Milan, Italy), founded in 1996, adopts an integrated multidisciplinary approach to assist victims, with a team composed of gynaecologists, psychologists, social workers, forensics, sexologists, lawyers, and paediatricians when needed [2].

Besides medical and psychological assistance, meticulous examination, interpretation and documentation of genital and extragenital lesions, as well as correct evidence collection—e.g., DNA swabs, sperm slides, blood and urine samples to test for drug-facilitated rape—are fundamental, since they may affect possible legal proceedings. These practices entail high levels of specialization, as well as an effective collaboration between all the professionals involved. At the same time, physical examination and evidence collection should be conducted in full respect of women's dignity, which is an important component of victims' perception of justice [3]. A lack of sensitivity during these procedures may intensify psychological trauma by re-exposing women to objectification, in the sense of feeling treated like a *body of evidence* rather than a person of worth.

Based on our experience, collecting data for the judicial system is as important as clinical assistance, as we have observed that an appropriate and qualified management of forensic evidence, and at times even the condemnation of the perpetrator, may significantly improve the victim's psychological outcome and quality of life.

Securing justice for victims of sexual violence is a complex process that should not be considered as exclusively aimed at convicting the perpetrators. Indeed, providing patient-centred care, characterised by sensitivity, empathy and attention, is a fundamental component of restoring justice.

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