

Answer to question on notice – Doctors against violence towards women

Examples of Coercive control scenarios seen in GP that may not constitute Harassment or Stalking

1. Financial Abuse; restricting access to money for food, clothing, and others. The patient may not have access to an account.

In addition, they may not be able to attend medical appointments if the Medicare item number is flagged on the Medicare and MyGov app or if the Medicare rebate goes into the partners bank account.

A victim may be working and able to afford to see a lawyer, but not if that account is being controlled by the abuser. Many victims may not be able to access the account and remove money without suspicion. Community legal centres are only able to offer substantial help to those who are unemployed or not in combined income relationships.

2. Threats to children, self and pets.

Victims often sight valid concerns on these.

Perpetrators often use threats of suicide to coerce a victim to stay and work with them on their relationship.

The perpetrator will often threaten to take the children or call CYPS to make unsubstantiated reports. The perpetrator may be well resourced and able to engage lawyers and the family court system to restrict access to the children. The victim will prefer to stay and remain able to protect the children at all costs to self. They are fiercely protective of their children.

They may harm throwing pets out the front door to 'run away'.

3. Restricting access to health and medical care towards the victim and the children.

If the victim or the children need psychological or medical care.

The victim and the children may not be able to access health care if sick, need to see a psychologist or have the children assessed by a psychologist (without the other parents' consent).

A victim may have significant burns or life-threatening illness (eg Anaphylaxis) and the perpetrators have been known to restrict access to medical assistance. This engenders a sense of absolute control over a victim's life (and ability to literally stay alive and breathe) and the feeling of 'holding one's life in their hand' by instilling these controls.

4. Stonewalling put downs and consequences.

If victims are non-compliant with the perpetrator.

Eg not having a meal ready on time, not delivering on sexual intercourse, not cleaning the house, not dressing a certain way, or merely by disagreeing in a conversation, then there may be consequences in regards to access to food, money, children or indeed they may be not spoken to for a long period of time, which will lead to fear and anxiety.

Put downs will include persistently relaying to a victim that they are not worthwhile mothers, partners, parents and humans through this pervasive messaging.

“you are lazy, you are ugly, you are fat, you are useless, no one likes you, you cannot cook, you are a terrible parent”. This messaging over time may lead to very low mood. poor sense of self and self-worth.

The victim will look to the perpetrator to seek praise, love and worth (which may appear to an outsider as a loving relationship) and try their utmost to achieve that.

5. Alienation of family and friends;

Often an abuser will isolate a victim geographically or through manipulating close relationships of the victim to isolate them. The abuser may alienate family and friends over time due to disagreements with all parties and family and friends may drift away further isolating the victim from being able to reach out.

The abuser may perpetuate untrue stories as a part of this isolation and or paint the victim as an instigator of their relationship demise.